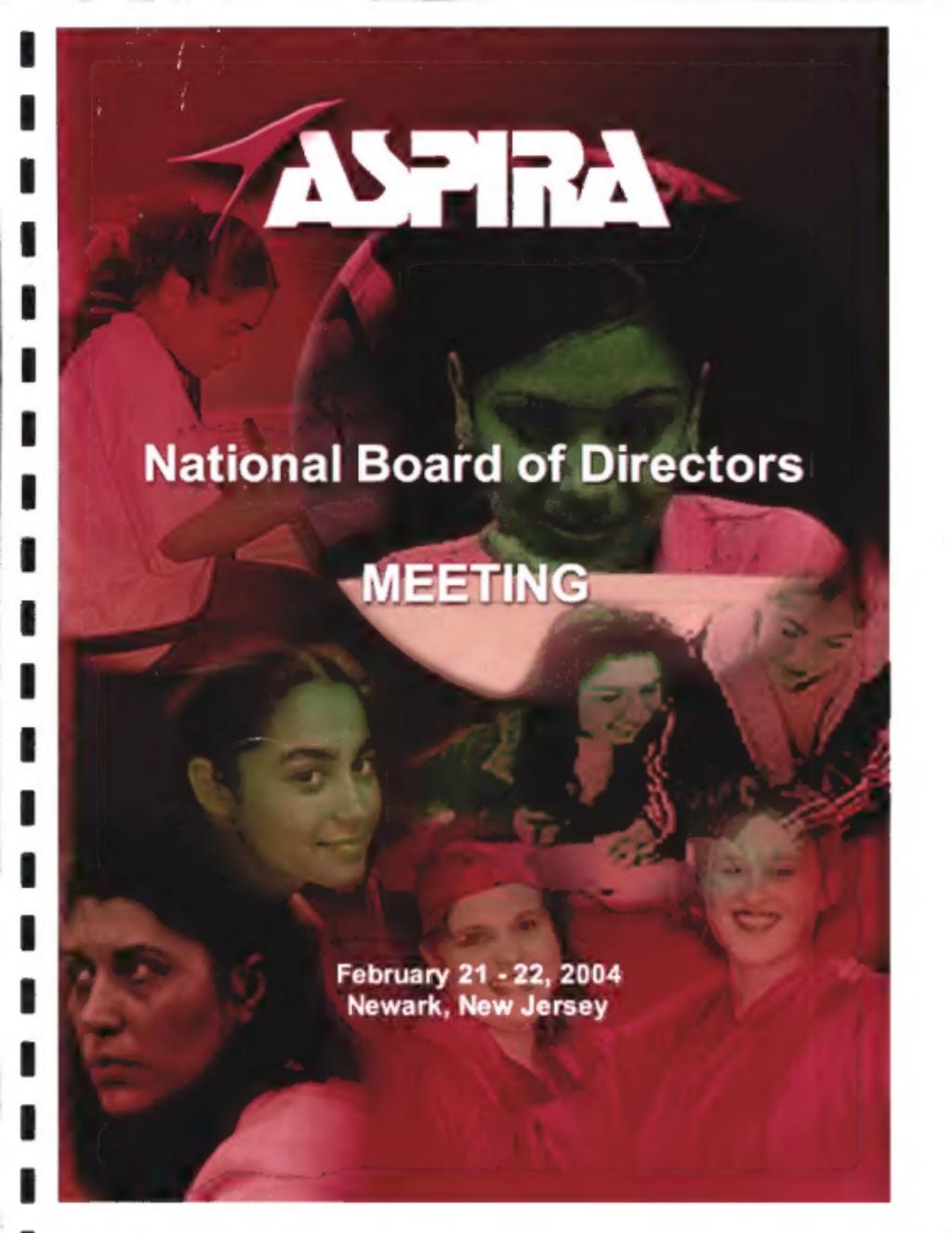


# ASPIRA



## National Board of Directors MEETING

February 21 - 22, 2004  
Newark, New Jersey

ASPIRA Association, Inc.  
National Board of Directors Meeting  
February 21 - 22, 2004

Holiday Inn Newark Airport  
Newark, New Jersey

**SCHEDULE**

**Friday, February 20, 2004**

2:00 pm – 5:00pm      Arrival at Newark

**Saturday, February 21, 2004**

8:30 – 9:00am	Continental Breakfast
9:00 – 12:00 noon	Meeting, Student Affairs Committee Meeting, Council of Executive Directors
12:00 noon – 1:00pm	Lunch
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Meeting – Executive Committee
2:00 – 6:00pm	Meeting – National Board of Directors
6:30 – 9:00pm	Dinner (Newark Restaurant)

**Sunday, February 22, 2004**

8:30 – 9:30 am	Continental Breakfast
9:30 – 1:30 pm	Meeting – National Board of Directors
1:30 – 5:00pm	Depart Newark







**Executive Committee  
National Board of Directors Meeting  
ASPIRA Association  
February 21, 2004  
Newark, New Jersey**

**PROPOSED AGENDA**

- 1.0 \* Approval of the Agenda
- 2.0 \* Review and approval of the Minutes of the November 11, 2003 Executive Committee Meeting
- 3.0 Review of the minutes of the Minutes of the August, 2003 National Board of Directors Meeting
- 4.0 Recommendation to Amend the Articles of Association
- 5.0 ASPIRANTES Alumni Association Recommendation
- 6.0 New Business
- 7.0 Adjourn

\* Action Items



Notes

**National Board of Directors Meeting**  
**ASPIRA Association**  
**February 21-22, 2003**  
**Newark, New Jersey**

**PROPOSED AGENDA**

**NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- 1.0 \* **Executive Committee Meeting** (Tab1)
- 2.0 **National Board of Directors Meeting**  
Approval of the Agenda (Tab 2)
- 3.0 \* Review and approval of the Minutes of the August, 2003 Board Meeting  
(Tab 3)
- 4.0 Associates' Reports
- 5.0 Student Affairs Committee Report
- 6.0 Chairperson's Report (Tab 4)  
Proposal to amend the Articles of Association
- 7.0 \* *Aspirante* Alumni Fellowship (Tab 5)
- 8.0 Treasurer's Report- (Tab 6)  
Revenue and Expenditures Report  
Endowment Fund Report  
Audit FY 2003 Report
- 9.0 \* Strategic Plan Priorities (Tab 7)
- 10.0 President's Report (Tab 8)
- 11.0 New Business
- 12.0 Adjourn

\* Action Items



Notes

ASPIRA Association, Inc  
National Board of Directors Meeting  
August 10, 2003  
Newark, New Jersey

**Members Present**

Ms. Myrna M. Rivera, S I M C  
Chair of the Board

Mr. Wilfredo Matos, Vice Chair  
Program, Chairperson, ASPIRA of  
Connecticut

Ms. Helga Umpierre, Vice Chair  
Personnel, Chairperson  
ASPIRA, Inc. of Puerto Rico

Ms. Sonia Sanchez, Secretary  
Chairperson, ASPIRA Inc., of Illinois

Ms. Lydia Hernández-Vélez, Treasurer  
Chairperson, ASPIRA Inc., of  
Pennsylvania

Ms. Magda Yrizarry, Chairperson  
ASPIRA, Inc. of New York

Mr. Angelo González  
Chairperson ASPIRA Inc., of Florida

Ms. Kelly Rodríguez,  
Chair, Student Affairs Committee  
Student Representative,  
ASPIRA, Inc. of Florida

Mr. Luis Cuevas, At-Large Member

**Student Representatives**

Mr. Daniel Martínez, Student  
Representative  
ASPIRA Inc., of Connecticut

Mr. Héctor Asturles  
Student Representative  
ASPIRA Inc., of New York

Mr. Edwin Medina  
Student Representative  
ASPIRA, Inc. de Puerto Rico  
(for Mr. Orlando Lugo)

Ms. Ellen Espallat, Student  
Representative, ASPIRA Inc., of  
Pennsylvania

**Presidents, Executive Directors**

Mr. Ronald Blackburn-Moreno,  
National Office

Ms. Ivette Cao Romero  
ASPIRA of Illinois  
(for Mr. José Rodríguez)

Mr. William Colón  
ASPIRA of New Jersey

Mr. William Gómez  
ASPIRA de Puerto Rico  
(for Ms. Hilda Maldonado)

Mr. Alfredo Calderón  
ASPIRA of Pennsylvania

**National Office Staff**

Mr John Villamil, Executive Vice  
President and CIO

Ms Hilda Crespo, Vice President Public  
Policy and Federal Relations

**Excused**

Ms Mercedes del Valle Rana,  
Chairperson, ASPIRA Inc. of New  
Jersey

Mr Héctor Gesualdo, Executive  
Director, ASPIRA Inc., of New York

Ms. Alma Maya, Executive Director,  
ASPIRA of Connecticut

Mr Raúl Martínez, Executive Director,  
ASPIRA of Florida

Mr Adam Garcia,  
Student Representative,  
ASPIRA Inc., of New Jersey

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson Ms. Myrna Rivera at 9:30 a.m.

#### **0.0 Approval of the Agenda**

- Ms. M. Rivera welcomed board members
- Ms. M. Rivera shared the Executive Committee's proposed changes to the agenda
- Ms. H. Umpierre made a motion to approve the agenda with the proposed changes.
- Mr. W. Matos seconded
- Motion was approved by unanimous vote

#### **1.0 Review and Approval of the Minutes of the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 National Board of Directors Meeting.**

- Ms. M. Rivera asked Board members to review the minutes
- Several minor corrections were made to the minutes that were noted by the recorder
- Ms. M. Yrizarry made a motion to approve the minutes
- Mr. A. Gonzalez seconded
- Motion was approved by unanimous vote

#### **2.0 Associates Update**

- Ms. M. Rivera indicated that the Associates have fifteen minutes to report, and that copies of some reports have been received
- Associates reported on local activities and events (See Appendix, Associates' reports)
- After the reports, Ms. M. Rivera suggested taking 30 minutes recess and reconvening at 12:30.

The Board of Directors reconvened at 12:30 pm.

#### **4.0 Student Affairs Committee Report**

- Mr. D. Ortiz informed the board that he is the new treasurer of the Students Affairs Committee. He reported that the SAC is planning several events and that in order to fund these activities, they are requesting a monthly donation of \$50 from each Associate office. He indicated that possible uses for the funds are special leadership seminars, site equipment, communications, printing and travel. He recommended some ways on how Associates can fundraise and obtain the \$50 donation, such as charging students a membership fee. Mr. D. Ortiz then introduced the other SAC student members.

- SAC member answered questions from Board members regarding the membership fee
- Ms M Rivera congratulated SAC members and advised that the decision of the \$50 donation must be made at each Associate first. Therefore, students need to approach their State Chair to obtain approval at the local level. Once a unanimous vote is reached from the local level then this Board can affirm the matching of the funds
- Ms K Rodriguez asked Ms M Rivera about the possibility of bringing the plan as an action item in the next Executive Committee meeting if approved at the local level
- Ms. M. Rivera explained that the decision-making process would be as follows first, as a Board, they approve a motion to take the plan back to the local level, second, the local level approves the plan, and third, the National Board will vote on the issue and approve a match by the National office
- Ms K Rodriguez continued with the SAC presentation, reporting on the issue of student member continuity. The SAC proposed adding one representative to the SAC from each Associate, who would not be a member of the National Board, but a national ACF. The members of the national ACF would be a committee within the SAC. The national ACF, which would meet with the SAC on a monthly basis, would pursue three goals: succession, mentorship within SAC, and having a larger student voice and representation. She also informed that the ACFs should meet in September to review their by-laws so that student representatives could serve at least two-years on the National Board and the SAC. She summarized the process the three requests: the first step would be to standardize the by-laws of each association so students can serve two years. Second, they would amend the by-laws to have past ACF members become members of the National ACF. Third, each Associate would approve the membership donation. She explained that after this processes had taken place locally, they will present the plan as an action item in the National Board meeting on February
- Ms. M Rivera suggested that she present at the Executive Committee meeting and bring the full plan as an action item in the next National Board meeting
- Ms M Rivera reminded Board members that they had agreed and voted on requesting that each Associate amend their by-laws to ensure continuity of the student representative. She asked that the Associates remember to amend their by-laws. She asked Ms. M. Yrizarry to provide other Associates with information on the amendment process they went through in New York when they amended their by-laws. Ms M Rivera suggested including the topic in the next Executive Committee meeting in the reports from each Associate, and that receive a presentation from Ms. K. Rodriguez at that time
- Ms K Rodriguez reported that the SAC met three times during the Board retreat. The students discussed the Youth Convocations in New Jersey and New York for next year. They also discussed ideas for workshops at the Technology Tools Conference in Puerto Rico and at the Youth Convocation

- Ms. S. Sánchez presented a motion to request that the local chairs bring the item of a contribution to the SAC of no less than \$50 per month as an action item to their local Boards
- Ms. M. Yrizarry seconded the motion
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote.
- Ms. M. Rivera indicated that the board would need to decide on whether to have the National Office match whatever the Associates decide
- Ms. M. Yrizarry presented a motion that the National Office match all contributions coming from the Associates
- Mr. W. Matos seconded
- Mr. L. Cuevas presented an amendment to the motion so that the minimum amount that needs to be raised by the SAC committee is \$4,200 on an annual basis and that the National Office will match this amount dollar to dollar
- Mr. W. Matos seconded the motion as amended
- The motion was approved with one abstention
- Ms. M. Rivera asked Ms. K. Rodriguez to include more details at the next Executive Committee meeting on the concept of the National ACF

#### 5.0 Treasurer's Report

- Ms. L. Hernández-Velez asked Board members receive the statement of financial position and revenue and expenditure reports for the period ending fiscal year 2002-2003
- The Board received the revenue and expenditures report and statement of financial position
- Ms. L. Hernández-Velez presented a motion for a budget resolution authorizing the National Office to expend funds based on the FY 2003 budget until the FY 04 budget was approved
- Ms. M. Rivera amended the motion to add that the FY 2004 budget be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting
- Ms. M. Yrizarry seconded
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote
- Ms. L. Hernández-Velez presented a motion to approve the auditors for FY 2002-2003
- Ms. H. Umpierre seconded the motion
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote
- Ms. M. Rivera discussed the Endowment Report

#### 6.0 Election of Officers

- Ms. Sánchez informed that the nominations committee is proposing a slate of Officers that is the same as the current officers

- Ms Myrna M Rivera, S I M C , Chair of the Board
- Mr Wilfredo Matos, Vice Chair Program,
- Ms Helga Umpierre, Vice Chair Personnel,
- Ms. Sonia Sanchez, Secretary
- Ms. Lydia Hernández-Vélez, Treasurer

- Mr L. Cuevas presented a motion to accept the slate
- Ms K Rodriguez seconded
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote
- Ms. M Rivera requested that the nominations committee seek candidates for at-large positions

#### **7.0 President's Report**

- The President's Report was received and entered into the record
- Mr R. Blackburn informed that he wrote a letter to Ms. Digna Sánchez, President of the ASPIRANTE Alumni Fellowship entity, indicating that ASPIRA was willing to collaborate with them, but however there were deep concerns about the name and copyright

#### **8.0 Chairman's Report**

- Chairperson report was received and entered into the record
- Ms M Rivera asked Board members to learn more about the Hispanic Association for Corporate Responsibility
- Ms. M Rivera also asked Board members to review their Board compositions based on their strategic plan discussed at the retreat

#### **9.0 Other Business**

- No other businesses were presented

#### **10.0 Adjourn**

- Ms. M Rivera requested a motion to adjourn
- Ms. S. Sánchez presented a motion to adjourn
- Ms. L. Hernandez-Vélez seconded
- Motion was approved by unanimous vote

APPENDIX I  
Associates Reports

ASPIRA of New Jersey

- Mr W Colon announced that ASPIRA of New Jersey received the approval of the *No Child Left Behind Tutoring Program* for supplemental services. He conservatively indicated that the program will bring in \$350,000 of revenue and the program will reach 200 students. He reported that ASPIRA of New Jersey was not affected by state cutting funds. He indicated that this was possible through the lobbying efforts made by their lobbyist and students in the State Legislature. He reported that on March 21<sup>st</sup> they had a successful *Youth Legislative Forum*, in Trenton. Students had the opportunity to express their concerns with State Legislators. The students also decide when they will testify on some issues. They also had a very important hearing on the State Legislature concerning immigration and how undocumented students cannot attend college in New Jersey. Mr W Colón shared the successful Gala Concert on May 23<sup>rd</sup> with performances by Iuna de Segrelles and AREYTO Ballet Folklórico Nacional de Puerto Rico. Mr W Colón reported on the *Fifth Annual Latino Education Conference* that occurred on May in Las Vegas. He indicated it was an excellent conference with around 400 participants. He also reported on the *South Jersey Latino Parents Conference* on June 7<sup>th</sup> in Atlantic City. They had over 25 parents. Mr W Colon reported on the *Third Annual Youth Leadership Convocation* that took place in Upstate NY on July 24-27. They had 140 students and 30 adults, from all over the United States. Mr W Colón announced events coming up such as an activity sponsor by AT&T honoring Latino State Legislators, the South Jersey Latino Parents Conference on October, and the Legislative Golf Tournament and Technology Tools Conference on December

ASPIRA de Puerto Rico

- (Editor's note: the speaker mentioned that she wanted this entered into the record, so it is kept in the original language to maintain accuracy. An English translation will follow.) Ms. H Umpierre shared with members
- "Yo quiero compartir la preocupación de Puerto Rico, la tristeza de Puerto Rico en relación a esta organización- que lo mencioné medio en chiste pero es en serio- de la des-puertorriqueñización de esta agencia. Nosotros entendemos que en Puerto Rico, nosotros no somos un grupo minoritario. Pero también entendemos que el propósito por el que se fundó ASPIRA, fue para mejorar nuestra comunidad, y nuestra comunidad no ha llegado a un nivel que se soñó que pudiera llegar. Estamos sirviendo a nuestra comunidad pero esos servicios se han diluido porque las necesidades económicas, las condiciones de satisfacción de nuestra comunidad no ha llegado a los que quisiéramos que llegara, ni a la comunidad de puertorriqueños en este país ni a la nuestra, la realidad nuestra en

Puerto Rico En Puerto Rico que tenemos unos problemas muy serios y cada uno trata de hacer lo que puede. Celebramos la diversidad, pero entendemos que en realidad no hemos cumplido con la misión original. Y ahora estamos acercándonos a hacernos redentores de una comunidad mucho más amplia que tiene igual de necesidades, pero en realidad las nuestras no se han cumplido todavía.

- Translation "I want to share with you the concerns in Puerto Rico, the sadness of Puerto Rico regarding this organization- that I mentioned earlier as a joke, but that it's serious- about the 'des-puertorriqueñización' of this agency. We understand that in Puerto Rico we are not a minority group. We also understand that the purpose of founding ASPIRA was to improve our community, but our community has not yet reached the level that it was once dreamed it could reach. We are serving our community, but those services have been diluted because of the economic needs, and the satisfaction conditions of our community have not yet reached those that we wanted to reach, neither the Puerto Rican community in the United States or ours- our reality in Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico where we have serious problems and where all of us try to do something. We celebrate diversity, but in reality we feel that we have not accomplished our original mission. Now we are opening ourselves as missionaries of a much ample community, that have the same needs, but in reality we have not served ours."
- Ms H Umpierre reported that ASPIRA of Puerto Rico is in good shape. She indicated that the budget has increased. Ms H Umpierre shared that they understand the need to start with kids in an early stage and the success of the Head Start program. She reported that they have \$17 million in their budget. She mentioned that the Head Start program had approached ASPIRA of Puerto Rico in the middle of the budget cut controversy to keep providing these services and to open a new location. Ms H Umpierre indicated that the HIV Prevention Program received funding in alliance with the Talent Search Program. They have continued developing education prevention campaigns about underage drinking. The Veteran Upward Bound Program, competed and received almost \$300,000 in funding. This program exceeded the proposed recruitment objectives. The Upward Bound Program received funding for another 4 years. The program also exceeded the proposed objectives for recruitment and services. Ms. H Umpierre indicated that the Cisco Academy has continued growing, and they are working on other proposals to expand services. She shared that Microsoft donated 26 computers to the Community Technology Centers and they are opening a center in Arroyo and other towns. The Supplemental Services program, under the No Child Left Behind Act, is still offering services during extended hours, Saturdays and summer at the schools, community centers and ASPIRA offices. Ms H Umpierre indicated that the Talent Search Program finished successfully its first year out of a five-year cycle. The Financial Education Program offered its first workshop for students.
- Mr E Medina reported that the Federation consisted of 16 clubs from various middle and high schools. During this year the clubs sent 29 representatives to

the Delegates Council and with the assistance of a Facilitator they worked in various issues and organized activities. From January to June the delegates organized 24 meetings with a total of 397 participants. Mr E Medina mentioned that among the activities organized during April was the Talent Search Program Spelling Bee competition. Another activity was a Field Day, with the purpose of coming with other Clubs. Parents also participated by volunteering in the kiosk to raise funds for the Youth Convocation trip to NY. Among activities during May was the Scientific Fair and the "Noche de Logros" where they recognized Aspirantes for their various contributions throughout the year. Mr E Medina shared pictures of some of the activities. Mr E Medina indicated that among activities during the months of June and July were the Summer Internships in United States colleges and the Recreational and Cultural Summer Camp in Ponce, the Financial Education workshop, and the Fourth Youth Leadership Convocation in NJ.

#### ASPIRA of Illinois

- Ms. I Cao Romero reported that ASPIRA of Illinois was able to purchase a building and converted it into a development center. She indicated that they are also reconstructing a site that will house their new charter school opening on August 25<sup>th</sup>. This science and technology school will accommodate around 200 students. Ms I Cao Romero informed about programs being offered such as, Talent Search, Health Careers, Public Policy among others. Ms I Cao Romero mentioned that the Youth Mentoring Program has 60 mentors who are community leaders and professionals to mentored students for four hours a month on an individual basis. She indicated that the Conflict Resolution Program which evolved from the Mentoring Program and is designed to provide activities and training in communication skills, conflict resolution and leadership development. She reported that the Health Careers Program is working in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago and Urbana Champaign and they were able to fund some of their activities. With regards to the Public Policy Club, they have done a film screening, met with State Legislators, and they are planning to come to Washington, DC in April. She indicated that the After School Program has 300 participants and has organized a variety of activities. Ms I Cao Romero reported on the three WIA Program that provide job preparation, career orientation, post-secondary school readiness and ACT preparation. This program is for students who have dropped out of school and are enrolled in ASPIRA's alternative school where they provided a variety of services. She explained the WIA Aviation Program, where they have 25 students enrolled, who wanted to enter the aviation industry. She indicated that the Leadership Development Institute has a cultural awareness component and as part of this they had a conference in March where 350 students gathered and discussed various issues. The ACF and a committee met to decide on ten topics that raised interest to them and to parents and they had a full-day conference with

different workshops. Nineteen schools participated in this conference. Ms. I Cao Romero shared some pictures of the Mirta Ramirez Computer Science Charter School that will become a model school. She reported that ASPIRA of Illinois' budget increased by \$2 million. She informed that the new site is housing 14 staff members, one computer center, one resource center, all the youth programs and adult services. They have also been able to produce the ASPIRA Times newspaper and their goal is to receive training from Mr. J Villamil to start sending it via web. The students work on the newspaper articles on a bi-monthly basis. Ms. I Cao Romero shared that ASPIRA of Illinois was recognized by the Illinois State College Board and for the first time she was asked to speak about the organization. They were awarded with ten full scholarships for two and four-year colleges and they are still negotiating with some of the other representatives of the Illinois State Board of Education. She reported that the Antonia Pantoja High School has built a partnership with Northwestern University to house the school at the campus. This will give students the opportunity to directly enter a four-year college. She indicated that the Technical College is waiting to be accredited.

#### ASPIRA of Florida

- Mr. A Gonzalez excused Mr. R Martinez for his absence. Mr. A González recognized the work of Mr. R Martinez and staff. He reported on the number of students that ASPIRA of Florida has assisted. He indicated that 3,000 participants stay in school and from a.i. the 247 graduating seniors, 75% enroll into post-secondary institutions. Mr. A Gonzalez informed on the expenses for ASPIRA programs. He reported on ASPIRA of Florida's is doing well from a financial standpoint, but they are having issues on diversifying their funding base. There is a significant reliance on public funding that the local Board has been discussing and that will be part of their strategic planning. He stated that one of the weaknesses they have continuously experiencing is the revenue on project contributions that are less than 3% of their operating budget where they should be at a 10% or 15%. Mr. A González pointed out the participants ethnicity, 12% of participants are Puerto Rican, 19% African American and 26% are from other groups. He indicated that this raises the concern that Ms. H Umpierre brought up before. The fact this client ethnicity diversity will have serious funding implications because the state of Florida grant funding gives great emphasis and it is determined by who is being served, specifically at-risk populations. Mr. A. González stated that there are also programmatic implications, were the ASPIRA Process to some extent is compromised, because it is not fully integrated emotionally and spiritually with those who are not from the same ethnic persuasion and nor do they have a sense of ownership or

connection to that reality. There are several struggles among the African American community to maintain their own identity and they have issues that are far greater than even ours. There is a difficulty addressing that issue with the number of participants that are being served and using the programmatic services that ASPIRA of Florida provide that are crucial in the cultural and identity awareness of what we are. It is difficult to integrate that [the ASPIRA process] with a population that has really no emotional, spiritual or philosophical connection to that reality. Mr. A. González indicated that they are facing a difficult time in ASPIRA of Florida with the impact that the diversity is having on staying in course with regards to our vision and direction. He informed that from a local Board standpoint 2003-2004 they are implementing a strategic plan. He indicated that the Board has focus on two considerations managing the growth and fiscal stability.

- Ms. K. Rodriguez reported on the Young Latinas Conference held in March on all five divisions. She indicated that both the Latinas Conference and the Muchachos Summit were a success. On March and April the ACF of Florida had the *Survivor Island*, with Keith O'Brien a leadership development trainer. During this event Mr. O'Brien organized critical thinking and team building skills projects. She informed that the College Tours were held on April and great efforts are being made to encourage students into going to college. Four students, staff, and a parent represented ASPIRA of Florida in the Third Annual Latino Education Conference in Las Vegas. She reported on the Award Ceremony held on May, where they recognize students for their achievements. She indicated that a College Summit was held on June where junior students entering their senior year had the opportunity to learn about applying to college and financial aid. She informed that the ACF elections are going to be held on December and this is her last term. Mr. K. Rodriguez indicated that she has been working with Mr. D. Ortiz to establish a College Club for those Aspirantes who want to keep serving ASPIRA. She reported that a student developed a new web page for ASPIRA of North Florida. Ms. K. Rodriguez commented on Mr. A. Gonzalez's statement about the current 12% Puerto Rican population that is being served. She commented that most of their clubs are located in schools where African Americans are majority. She shared that the ASPIRA of Florida has opened their offices to students where they are doing non-paid work at the offices.

#### ASPIRA of New York

- Ms. M. Yrizarry reported that ASPIRA of New York had a successful annual luncheon on May at the Pierre Hotel. Joaquin Aviles from Lehman Brothers was the Corporate Chair and they were able to raise a \$169,000 gross and over \$100,000 net. She explained that their goal was for this luncheon was to raise at least \$100,000 and that they wanted the luncheon could fundraise a quarter of a million dollars every year, since is what their general fund requires. She shared that during the event they awarded 32 scholarships of \$1,000 to students. Ms. M. Yrizarry indicated that they have secured Citicorp as the Corporate Chair for

next year's luncheon. She reported that they needed to fundraise more unrestricted money since their budget relies mainly on public funding. During the summer they had a cash flow crunch with \$250,000 on receivables from the city and state. She indicated that they are excited about the offer of the National Office to establish a credit line for cash flow assistance. She shared that ASPIRA of New York Board continues to be concerned about the Clubs and where they reside in the revenue and services structures and how many people are being served through the club model. She stated that as a Board in NY and at the national level it is always said that the clubs are the priority and yet the resources of time and money are being allocated elsewhere. She informed that the ASPIRA of New York Board is addressing that issue and is working on a "adopt a club" model, where a corporation can adopt a club and give funding and support. This will be possible through the Volunteer Incentive Program, an organization that is being formed for those purposes. She informed that in order of support this effort they will have a networking reception on October to reach out all the alumni, in specific those who received scholarships from the Achievers Luncheon. Ms. M. Ynzarry reported that the ASPIRA of New York Board will be restructuring its membership and identify new candidates.

- Mr. H. Astiles informed that ASPIRA of New York had some big events including the Tenth Annual City Youth Conference hosted in Manhattan Center High School for math and Science. He indicated that they held a College Fair on March with around 250 participants. Among other activities held was the Thirteenth Annual Puerto Rican Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute where students are trained for eight weeks and debate on the current Bills discussed at the NY State Assembly. They also organized the Aretyo Ceremony hosted by Lehman Brothers.

#### ASPIRA of Pennsylvania

- Mr. A. Calderon reported that the Eugenio M. de Hostos Charter School was rechartered for another five years. He informed on the Parent Truancy Program where they made 4,000 successful home visits. They State Truancy Court funded the program and assigned two case managers. He indicated that they spoke with singer and former Aspirante Frankie Negron to be ASPIRA's spokesperson. He reported that they are currently working on their audit.
- Ms. E. Espiallat shared some pictures of an activity in Harrisburg where they met with State representatives. She informed on the Washington, DC activity where they met with Rep. Chaka Fattah and Sen. Arlen Specter. She indicated that ASPIRA of Pennsylvania serves 18 schools. Ms. E. Espiallat informed about the Annual ASPIRA Award Ceremony in which she was selected Aspirante of the Year. She indicated that they are currently developing workshops for the Annual Leadership Retreat. Ms. E. Espiallat shared some pictures from last year's retreat and other activities. She indicated that students are planning an educational trip to Puerto Rico and meet ASPIRA of Puerto Rico students. She informed that students are campaigning for ACT elections. She indicated that Pedro Rosello former Governor

of Puerto Rico visited students, parents and staff of ASPIRA of Pennsylvania. She shared that students started a new radio station named *La Onda*

ASPIRA of Connecticut

- Mr. D. Ortiz shared some highlights on the Second Officers Retreat on April. Over 50 students from the 17 clubs participated on the retreat. He indicated that over 300 students attended the Arcto Ceremony. The Cesar Batalla Fund awarded three \$1,000 scholarships. He indicated that his club organized a trip to Boston to visit various colleges. He reported on the ASPIRA Luncheon where they fundraised \$20,000 on revenue. He informed that Clubs have had career speakers and college visits and they are trying to partner with other non-profits in Connecticut. He shared the success of the APFX Program and explained the various workshops offered by the program. He informed that 112 parents graduated from the program in Bridgeport.





# ASPIRA Inc. de Puerto Rico

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Hilda M. Jiménez  
Presidenta Junta de Directores

~~Director Ejecutivo~~

18 de noviembre de 2003

Sra Myrna Rivera  
Presidenta  
Junta Directores  
The Aspira Association, Inc  
1444 Eye St NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005

Querida Myrna

En nombre de toda la Junta queremos agradecerles a Joe y a ti la acogida que nos ofrecieron para la reunión del sábado pasado. Como siempre, disfrutamos de todas las buenas vibras de tu casa.

Doy ahora seguimiento a nuestra conversación de ese día relacionada con la actividad que Aspira de New Jersey intenta realizar en Puerto Rico y la decisión de la Junta de Directores de protestarla

Sabemos que nuestra Isla es la base de la cultura y raíces de la población a quien servimos y siempre nos agrada recibir aquí a los hermanos de las Asociadas, aportar y cooperar con las actividades que llevan a cabo en la Isla

Queremos hacer ahora referencia a los acuerdos que han sido aceptados por todas las asociadas desde febrero de 2002 (véase minuta de reunión del Comité Ejecutivo de la Junta de Directores Nacional)

Tanto nuestra Junta como la directora ejecutiva, Hilda Maldonado, estamos indignados con la forma en que Aspira de Puerto Rico, pasando por encima de Aspira de New Jersey, hace acercamientos directos con el Departamento de Educación y personal clave de las universidades en Puerto Rico, en este caso con el Rector de la UPR en Cayey, para llevar a cabo un programa de inmersión el verano próximo. Esto es asunto de procedimiento y es la segunda vez que le ocurre a ASPIRA de Puerto Rico con New Jersey. Estamos conscientes de la necesidad de llevar a cabo programas de "fees for service" para recaudar fondos, pero no nos parece adecuado que se haga de esta manera.

El concepto de inmersión de maestros de Estados Unidos en el idioma y la cultura de Puerto Rico es uno muy loable; no obstante, la forma de llevarlo a cabo debe ser conforme a criterios que aseguren su éxito y eviten incidentes que puedan afectar negativamente el nombre de ASPIRA en Puerto Rico. Recuerda que los de New Jersey se van, pero nosotros nos quedamos enfrentando los problemas que como resultado de una planificación festinada puedan surgir. A ASPIRA de Puerto Rico no se le ha presentado ningún tipo de plan de acción que refleje la coherencia del proyecto, por lo tanto no puede permitir que se use su nombre, ASPIRA, para algo que no conoce. Además, nuestra Junta entiende que los protocolos se establecen para ser cumplidos. De no hacerlo, resultan académicos y hasta propiciantes del caos que se pretende impedir, y lo que es peor, menoscabantes de la propia autoridad que los crea. Queremos orden y respeto en nuestra Asociación.

«Cómo se sentiría cualquier asociada si Aspira de Puerto Rico fuera a crear programas con la Junta de Educación de su estado y cop las Universidades sin incluirlas antes de comenzar el proceso?» Más aún habiendo precedentes y acuerdos previos sobre estos procedimientos.

En estos momentos reclamamos que el Sr. Colón cese y desista de sus planes con este proyecto y se acoja al procedimiento oficialmente adoptado por la Asociación de ASPIRA en su reunión de febrero de 2002.

Sugerimos también que se instituya un procedimiento para actividades en el futuro. Tal vez se puedan procesar a través de la oficina en Washington antes de entrar en reuniones en territorios que no son los suyos. Hay que respetar la territorialidad de cada uno. Como todos actuamos en nombre de Aspira, crea confusión, violenta estilos y relaciones que se han trabajado con mucho cuidado y por mucho tiempo.

La Junta de Directores y esta servidora esperamos su pronta acción y quedamos a tu disposición.

Respetuosamente,

*Helga M Umpierre*

Helga M Umpierre  
Presidenta,  
Junta de Directores  
Aspira de P.R.

cc Ronald Blackburn



## Notes

1328 Broadway, Suite 524  
New York, New York 10001



September 19, 2003

Dear Affiliate Directors

Prior to her death, Dr. Antonia Pantoja informed you of the creation of the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship. The Fellowship was organized by Dr. Pantoja with the help of others to mobilize and utilize the resources of the many people who have used the services of Aspira affiliates while students. In other words, our organization strives to find ways in which to build upon the great work that Aspira has always done for our community.

The first project underway for the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship is the Dr. Antonia Pantoja Scholarship Fund. Dr. Pantoja developed the fund with the gifts from her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party. She and others have subsequently added to the fund allowing us to donate a \$500 scholarship per Aspira affiliate this fall in her name. The Aspirante Alumni Fellowship would like to work with the Aspira affiliates by having our first scholarships donated to students whom you select for funding. The Scholarship Fund is prepared to provide one scholarship of \$500 for each student deemed in need and who most exemplifies the characteristics of community service and leadership. Since the scholarships this first year are small, our scholarship committee has recommended that the funds be earmarked for students to use for educational materials and books.

While the fall semester is already in session, students are still finalizing their courses, purchasing their books, and preparing their budgets for the spring semester. Therefore, we are requesting that each affiliate submit the name of the student of their choice to the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship by October 31, 2003 so that we can distribute the awards as quickly as possible. We will forward the award check directly to the student. If an affiliate would prefer to bestow the award upon the student itself during a planned event or ceremony, we ask that the award be identified as the Dr. Antonia Pantoja Scholarship granted by the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship and that we be informed of the details of the event. Please forward the name and address of the students of your choice to:

Aspirante Alumni Fellowship  
Attn: Digna Sanchez, President  
Dr. Pantoja Scholarship Fund  
1328 Broadway, Suite 524  
New York, New York 10001

We look forward to working with you on this important project to honor the name of Dr. Pantoja and continue our commitment to education and the development of our youth.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Digna Sanchez".  
Digna Sanchez  
President, Aspirante Alumni Fellowship

1328 Broadway, Suite 524  
New York, New York 10001



September 19, 2003

Mr. Ronald Blackburn-Moreno  
President and CEO  
Aspira Association, Inc.  
1444 Eye Street, NW  
Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005

*For:*  
Dear Mr. Blackburn-Moreno.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship, Inc. (AAF), I want to thank you for your response to our presentation to the Aspira National Board of Directors in February of this year. We are extremely pleased and encouraged to learn from your letter of April 3, 2003 that you are open to collaborating in this important endeavor to fulfill the successful creation of Dr. Pantoja's last organizational vision. That vision, as she so clearly presented to all of us through her direct communication with representatives of the Aspira affiliates and through her video presentation at our inaugural luncheon, was and continues to be the successful development of the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship.

Dr. Pantoja recognized that what was missing from the many institutions that she created or helped create was one devoted to establishing a financial base for those we collectively serve, to improve the financial literacy and economic empowerment of our communities, and to provide an organizational framework through which Aspira graduates as well as those that have been part of the Aspira legacy could network, collaborate, and provide support to each other as well as to the Aspira institutions that helped them to succeed.

Though we understand your concerns with regard to the use of the name "Aspira" as it relates to the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship, no real conflict exists. Aspira is a youth organization while the AAF is an organization designed to meet the needs of Aspira graduates, former staff, Board members and volunteers. As we have stated in the past, the relationship between our organizations is envisioned as one of cooperation. As you and the affiliates are aware, Dr. Pantoja chose the name "Aspirante Alumni Fellowship" for strategic reasons. She recognized that regardless of age or status, those who have had and those who will have a positive experience with Aspira most closely identify their positive experience with the name Aspira or Aspirante. As a result, a national membership organization aimed at attracting and harnessing the skills, experiences, and energies of past and future generations of Aspira alumni should have the name that they identify with and cherish. Your suggestion that the organization be named after Dr. Pantoja, though in other contexts a good one (e.g. The Dr. Antonia Pantoja Scholarship Fund) would not work well for the alumni organization.

Another extremely important reason for retaining the name "Aspirante" is that the new organization has always been envisioned as one that would part of the family of Aspira organizations. As such, we view ongoing collaboration, cooperation, and mutual assistance within well-defined boundaries as essential elements of this new endeavor. Your recommendation at our joint meeting in February of developing a Memorandum of Understanding is an excellent one. We feel that the MOU could address your concerns relative to the use of the name "Aspirante" as well as incorporate the kinds of agreements that would nurture the spirit of collaboration and cooperation needed for the new organization to succeed. As reflects our hope that we will work in partnership towards fulfilling Dr. Pantoja's last vision, we have drafted an MOU for your consideration. I hope that with this first step the process of developing a final MOU can begin apace.

There is no question in our minds that a thriving "Aspirante Alumni Fellowship" can be a significant asset to its members, the affiliates, and to the communities we serve. A concrete example of this is the expected awarding of the first grants under the Dr. Antonia Pantoja Scholarship Fund this autumn. As was agreed upon in February, all of the affiliates will benefit equally. This is effective cooperation and collaboration at work.

I want to close by thanking you again for the meeting in February and your letter of April 3, 2003, and by expressing my hope and wish that we can effectively work together to bring to fruition Dr. Pantoja's last vision so that it too may be part of her outstanding legacy to the Puerto Rican and Latino communities.

Wishing you the best, and looking forward to hearing from you in the near future, I am

Sincerely yours,



Digna Sanchez, Chairperson, AAF Inc

cc: Ms. Myrna Rivera, Chair Board of Directors

DRAFT

Memorandum of Understanding

THIS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is made and entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2003, by and between the Aspira Association, Inc and the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship, Inc. (AAF) and alternatively referred to as the "Parties" to this MOU

WHEREAS, the Parties to this MOU have resolved to cooperate and collaborate in strengthening the alumni base of Aspira Affiliates and in developing the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship, Inc as a viable organization,

Whereas, in furtherance of these endeavors the Parties have agreed to delineate their respective roles and responsibilities in relationship to the above;

Now, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual promises contained herein, the Parties agree as follows

**ARTICLE I - PARTIES**

- A) ASPIRA ASSOCIATION The Aspira Association promotes the empowerment of the Puerto Rican and Latino community by developing the leadership, intellectual, and cultural potential of its youth so that they may contribute their skills and dedication to the fullest development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community everywhere. In short, its mission is to empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy and the education and leadership development of its youth
- B) ASPIRANTE ALUMNI FELLOWSHIP The Aspirante Alumni Fellowship provides an organizational framework through which Aspirantes (Aspira student graduates, and former staff, Board members, and volunteers) can network, collaborate, and provide support to each other as well as to the Aspira institutions that helped them to succeed. In addition, the Fellowship works to measurably improve the financial literacy and economic empowerment of the Puerto Rican and Latino community. Finally, the Fellowship administers the Dr Antonia Pantoya Scholarship Fund in collaboration with the Aspira Association.

## ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

This MOU serves as testimony that the Parties have agreed to work cooperatively and collaboratively in support of endeavors of mutual interest and benefit

## ARTICLE III - RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

### A) The Aspira Association will

- Assist the Fellowship in the design of the Fellowship's alumni database as well as in the Fellowship's alumni recruitment efforts by sharing information about "Aspirantes" as defined in ARTICLE I - B above.
- Work cooperatively with the Fellowship in the design and implementation of effective joint communication and program coordination mechanisms
- Collaborate with the Fellowship on the awarding of the annual Dr Antonia Pantoja Scholarships

### B) The Aspirante Alumni Fellowship will:

- Work collaboratively with the Association in the design of the Fellowship's alumni database.
- Develop and maintain the Fellowship's alumni database that will be shared with the Association and its Affiliates.
- Design and implement programs for the benefit of Fellowship members and in cooperation with the Association aimed at increasing the financial literacy and economic empowerment of the members as well as providing opportunities for networking, collaboration, and mutual support.
- Administer the Dr Antonia Pantoja Scholarship Fund in collaboration with the Association
- Work cooperatively with the Association in the design and implementation of effective joint communication and program coordination mechanisms

#### ARTICLE IV - PLEDGE OF CONFIDENCE

- A) To Collaborate and Not Compete The Parties to this MOU agree to work cooperatively and collaboratively from a perspective of mutual assistance and respect for each organization's areas of concern, program, and influence. With this perspective as a guiding principle, the Parties agree not to compete in such areas as fund-raising and program development. While the Aspirante Association and its Affiliates provide direct services to youth, the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship provides services to graduates of the Aspira process and to those who have been integral to the delivery of the Aspira process. Thus the respective missions of the two organizations as well as the effective communication between the Parties should ensure non-competition and coordinated approaches that best serve the Puerto Rican and Latino community.
- B) To Honor and Respect the Founding Principles of Aspira The Parties agree to uphold the values and traditions inherent in the Aspira legacy. They do so in memory and respect, and under the guiding principles set forth by the founder of Aspira and the Aspirante Alumni Fellowship, Dr. Antonia Pantoja. The collaboration envisioned in this MOU fulfills Dr. Pantoja's vision of a strong Aspira Association working cooperatively with a strong Aspira alumni organization to effectively serve the Puerto Rican and Latino community.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have set their hands and seals the day and year first written above.



# Notes

Handwriting practice lines for notes. The page features a header 'Notes' and a series of horizontal lines for writing. On the far left edge, there is a vertical strip with a small number '6' at the bottom. Along the right edge, there are several circular punch holes and vertical binding lines.

**ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC  
REVENUES AND EXPENSES REPORT  
FOR JULY 2003 THROUGH DECEMBER 2003  
(UNAUDITED)**



	Modified Accrual			% of Budget Remaining
	Year to Date Actual	Annual Budget	Budget Balance	
<b>Support &amp; Revenue</b>				
Contributions and grants	662,910	1,213,584	\$ (550,674)	-45%
Federal Grants	117,938	308,595	(190,657)	62%
Interest Income	1,306	1,200	106	9%
Misc. income	26,942	58,894	(31,952)	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>809,098</b>	<b>1,582,273</b>	<b>(773,177)</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Salaries	261,276	650,452	389,178	60%
Fringe	54,868	137,849	82,981	60%
Bank Charges	239	1,000	761	76%
Board Expenses	13,547	15,000	1,453	10%
Consultants	108,458	130,585	22,127	17%
Legal Fees	1,225	2,000	775	39%
Equipment Purchase and Maint	4,247	4,000	(247)	-6%
Insurance	2,387	2,000	(387)	19%
Office Supplies	3,913	6,906	2,993	43%
Program Supplies	4,631	8,650	4,019	46%
Postage/Delivery	5,831	10,418	4,587	44%
Printing & Publications	9,046	32,930	23,884	73%
Rent	60,548	150,138	69,490	46%
Seminars/meetings	61,439	43,026	(18,414)	-43%
Telephone	8,966	15,218	6,252	41%
Travel	23,821	56,740	32,919	58%
Interest Expense	1,149	1,000	(149)	0%
Reserve	110,000	15,681	(94,339)	100%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>765,690</b>	<b>1,283,572</b>	<b>527,889</b>	<b>41%</b>
Transfers	52,100	298,700	246,600	83%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>807,790</b>	<b>1,582,272</b>	<b>774,482</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>REVENUES (UNDER ) EXPENSES</b>				
			1,306	

**ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
**READER'S DIGEST ENDOWMENT FUND**

DATE	TOTAL VALUE	DATE	TOTAL VALUE	DATE	TOTAL VALUE
NOV 30, 1990	455,565	AUGUST 10, 1994	648,534	MAY 3 1998	1,638,9
DEC 1990	451,436	SEPTEMBER 10, 1994	639,503	JUNE 30, 1998	1,094,9 5
JAN 31 1991	468,010	OCTOBER 31, 1994	645,002	JULY 1, 1998	1,077,810
FEB 24, 1991	495,4	NOVEMBER 30, 1994	630,239	AUGUST 31, 1998	966,613
MARCH 31, 1991	505,302	DECEMBER 1, 1994	638,550	SEPTEMBER 30, 1998	1,0 4,682
APRIL 30, 1991	505,35	JANUARY 3, 1995	649,260	OCTOBER 3, 1998	965,53
MAY 31, 1991	527,70	FEBRUARY 28, 1995	672,382	NOVEMBER 30, 1998	995,777
JUNE 30, 1991	51,372	MARCH 31, 1995	686,713	DECEMBER 30, 1998	127,8 0
JULY 31 199	528,14	APRIL 30, 1995	698,857	JANUARY 30, 1999	1,343,7
AUGUST 31, 1991	541,98	MAY 1, 1995	722,916	FEBRILARY 28, 1999	16,252
SEPTEMBER 30, 1991	539,444	JUNE 30 1995	739,033	MARCH 29, 1999	51,028
OCTOBER 31, 1991	519,295	JULY 10, 1995	743,837	APRIL 30, 1999	89,493
NOVEMBER 30, 1991	53,157	AUGUST 30, 1995	761,640	MAY 28, 1999	63,475
DECEMBER 31, 1991	573,76	SEPTEMBER 30, 1995	779,921	JUNE 30, 1999	1,87,692
JANUARY 31, 1992	566,266	OCTOBER 3 1995	781,..8	JULY 30, 1999	1,5,828
FEBRUARY 29, 1992	571,372	NOVEMBER 30, 1995	781,089	AUGUST 31, 1999	1,37,816
MARCH 31, 1992	566,717	DECEMBER 31, 1995	788,569	SEPTEMBER 30, 1999	29,717
APRIL 30, 1992	571,496	JANUARY 3, 1996	755,717	OCTOBER 30, 1999	17,232
MAY 31, 1992	571,925	FEBRILARY 29, 1996	762,944	NOVEMBER, 1999	178,297
JUNE 30, 1992	571,769	MARCH 3 1996	769,234	DECEMBER 31, 1999	159,046
JULY 31, 1992	590,220	APRIL 30 1996	772,819	JANUARY 3, 2000	121,974
AUGUST 3, 1992	584,59	MAY 3, 1996	78,757	FEBRILARY 29, 2000	,099,872
SEPTEMBER 30, 1992	507,00	JUNE 30, 1996	783,020	MARCH 3, 2000	63,428
OCTOBER 31, 1992	593,946	JULY 31, 1996	758,563	APRIL 31 2000	46,576
NOVEMBER 30, 1992	607,858	AUGUST 31, 1996	778,534	MAY, 31 2000	57,203
DECEMBER 31, 1992	6 3,35	SEPTEMBER 30, 1996	817,3,2	J NE 30, 2000	1,67,39
JANUARY 3, 1993	6,5,98	OCTOBLR 3, 1996	827,699	J L 3 1 2000	1,67,528
FEBRILARY 28, 1993	618,650	NOVEMBER 30, 1996	866, 90	AUGUST 31 2000	1,97,927
MARCH 3, 1993	629,303	DECEMBER 31, 1996	857,254	SEPTEMBER 30, 2000	1,88,177
APRIL 30, 1993	616,43	JANUARY 31, 1997	885,290	OCTOBER 3, 2000	035,021
MAY 31, 1993	625,80	FEBRILARY 28, 1997	888,336	NOVEMBER 30, 2000	1, 01, 765
JUNE 30, 1993	626,796	MARCH 31, 1997	862,403	DECEMBER 31, 2000	1,057,66
JULY 31 1994	620,64	APRIL 30, 1997	891,218	JANUARY 30, 2001	245,994
AUGUST 3, 1993	642,302	MAY 31, 1997	93,,036	FEBRILARY 27 2001	200,0 8
SEPTEMBER 30, 1993	641,347	JUNE 30, 1997	955,598	MARCH 1, 2001	,165,334
OCTOBER 3 1991	643,79	JULY 3, 1997	1,004,058	APRIL 30, 2001	, 91,23
NOVEMBER 30, 1993	63,700	AGUST 31 907	963,731	MAY 3, 2001	1, 91,140
DECEMBER 3, 1993	644,91	SEPTEMBER 30, 1997	999,111	JUNE 2001	75,830
JANUARY 3, 1994	652,912	OCTOBER 31 997	973,050	JULY 2001	997,097
FEBRUARY 28, 1994	646,942	NOVEMBER 30, 1997	999,048	August 2001	958,516
MARCH 3, 1994	624,848	DECEMBER 3, 1997	1,015,497	* September 200	9 8,889
APRIL 30, 1994	624,772	JANUARY 31, 1998	,622,971	* October 2001	9 4,035
MAY 31, 1994	610,47	FEBRILARY 28, 1998	,683,493	* November 2001	912,247
JUNE 30, 1994	619,830	MARCH 3,, 1998	,119,800	* December 2001	956,377
JULY 31 1994	629,523	APRIL 30, 1998	,055,946	* January 2002	923, 51
				* February 2002	908,273
				* March 2002	942,105
				* Apr. 2002	904,740
				* May 2002	888,165
				* June 2002	845,60

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC  
READER'S DIGEST ENDOWMENT FUND

JULY 2002**	907,612
AUGUST 2002**	9,519
SEPTEMBER 2002**	856,51
OCTOBER 2002**	839,630
NOVEMBER 2002**	916,767
DECEMBER 2002**	836,477
JUNE 2003**	917,418
JULY 2003	920,028
AUGUST 2003	934,264
SEPTEMBER 2003**	915,045
OCTOBER 2003	957,806
NOVEMBER 2003	977,702
DECEMBER 2003**	1,019,928

Page 2

\*\* Includes \$77,610 Margin on Line of Credit Down from \$136,29 in December 2002  
Total Current Value (12/2003) \$ 942,318.00

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

**ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.**

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2003  
WITH SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL  
INFORMATION FOR 2002

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

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# GELMAN, ROSENBERG & FREEDMAN

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS AND CONSULTANTS

## **INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT**

To the Board of Directors  
ASPIRA Association, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.

We have audited the accompanying statement of financial position of the ASPIRA Association, Inc. (the Association) as of June 30, 2003, and the related statements of activities and change in net assets, functional expenses and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Association's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. The prior year summarized comparative information has been derived from the Association's 2002 financial statements and, in our report dated May 2, 2003, we expressed an unqualified opinion on those statements.

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the ASPIRA Association, Inc. as of June 30, 2003, and its change in net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.



October 29, 2003

**ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**AS OF JUNE 30, 2003**  
**WITH SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2002**

ASSETS	2003	2002
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 717,839	\$ 72,237
Investments (Notes 2 and 5)	917,419	975,731
Accounts receivable	173,487	223,507
Loans to Associates, current portion (Note 9)	246,296	57,496
Inventory	-	304,719
Prepaid expenses	4,781	6,222
Advances	-	1,362
Total current assets	<u>2,059,802</u>	<u>1,641,274</u>
<b>EQUIPMENT AND LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS</b>		
Computer equipment and software	254,969	249,485
Office equipment (Note 6)	41,182	41,182
Leasehold improvements	<u>19,918</u>	-
Less: Accumulated depreciation and amortization	316,069	290,867
Net equipment and leasehold improvements	<u>(263,690)</u>	<u>(236,238)</u>
<b>OTHER ASSETS</b>		
Investments in deferred compensation (Note 8)	12,954	12,693
Loans to Associates, net of current portion (Note 9)	-	182,413
Deposits	<u>11,051</u>	<u>11,051</u>
Total other assets	<u>24,005</u>	<u>206,157</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>\$ 2,136,186</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 1,901,860</u></b>

## LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

		2002
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Lines of credit (Note 7)	\$ 148,611	\$ 205,129
Current portion of capital lease obligation (Note 6)	5,335	4,849
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	116,112	46,247
Due to subrecipients	108,697	355,559
Deferred rent (Note 6)	27,221	16,104
 Total current liabilities	 405,976	 627,886
<b>NONCURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Capital lease obligation, net of current portion (Note 6)	2,865	8,200
Deferred rent, net of current portion (Note 6)	24,155	40,259
Deferred compensation (Note 8)	12,954	12,693
Deposits held in escrow	4,580	328
 Total noncurrent liabilities	 44,554	 61,480
 Total liabilities	 450,530	 689,366
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Unrestricted	243,976	198,541
Temporarily restricted (Note 3)	936,855	509,126
Permanently restricted (Note 5)	504,825	504,825
 Total net assets	 1,685,656	 1,212,492
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 2,136,186</b>	<b>\$ 1,901,880</b>

## ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGE IN NET ASSETS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2003  
WITH SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2002

	2003			2002	
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total	Total
<b>REVENUE</b>					
Grants and contributions	\$ 413,292	\$ 1,071,030	\$ -	\$ 1,484,322	\$ 429,346
Government grants (Note 10)	290,103	-	-	290,103	517,322
Investment income (Note 2)	12,851	-	-	12,851	(126,495)
Other revenue	16,422	-	-	16,422	5,200
Net assets released from donor restrictions - satisfaction of donor restrictions (Note 4)	<u>643,301</u>	<u>(643,301)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total revenue	<u>1,376,069</u>	<u>427,729</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,803,798</u>	<u>825,373</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
Program services					
Education Access and Careers	1,100,963	-	-	1,100,963	907,823
Youth Leadership	6,802	-	-	6,802	49,204
Total program services	<u>1,107,765</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,107,765</u>	<u>956,887</u>
Supporting services					
General and Administrative	222,869	-	-	222,869	321,603
Total expenses	<u>1,330,634</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,330,634</u>	<u>1,278,490</u>
Change in net assets	45,435	427,729	-	473,164	(453,117)
Net assets at beginning of year	<u>188,541</u>	<u>509,126</u>	<u>504,825</u>	<u>1,212,492</u>	<u>1,665,609</u>
<b>NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 243,976</b>	<b>\$ 936,855</b>	<b>\$ 504,825</b>	<b>\$ 1,885,655</b>	<b>\$ 1,212,492</b>

## ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

**STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2003**  
**WITH SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2002**

	2003				2002	
	Program Services		Total Program Services	General and Administrative	Total Expenses	Total Expenses
	Education Access and Careers	Youth Leadership				
Salaries	\$ 425,241	\$ 5,205	\$ 430,446	\$ 6,100	\$ 436,546	\$ 429,609
Benefits (note 8)	87,214	1,093	88,307	5,499	93,006	88,373
Printing and production	17,811	-	17,811	-	17,811	6,298
Professional fees	-	-	-	128	128	-
Occupancy (Note 6)	13,631	-	13,631	133,334	146,965	145,713
Insurance	300	-	300	-	300	6,423
Depreciation and amortization	-	-	-	27,452	27,452	28,200
Telephone	17,431	-	17,431	-	17,431	18,385
Travel and entertainment	39,154	-	39,154	10,093	49,247	15,127
Consulting fees	204,818	-	204,818	60,391	265,207	189,047
Postage and delivery	5,039	-	5,039	-	5,039	5,388
Repairs and maintenance	-	-	-	-	-	4,742
Supplies	21,541	-	21,541	1,803	23,344	26,006
Meetings and conventions	8,666	-	8,666	5,000	13,666	3,158
Bank charges and miscellaneous	13,009	-	13,009	17,701	30,710	27,301
Interest expense	-	-	-	5,821	5,821	10,995
Equipment	8,052	-	8,052	556	8,608	5,505
Grants	124,565	-	124,565	17,148	141,711	243,061
Administration	-	-	-	46,842	46,842	24,160
Sub-total	906,470	6,298	902,768	337,866	1,330,634	1,278,490
Allocation of management and general	114,493	504	114,997	(114,997)	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,100,963</b>	<b>\$ 6,802</b>	<b>\$ 1,107,765</b>	<b>\$ 222,869</b>	<b>\$ 1,330,634</b>	<b>\$ 1,278,490</b>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

## ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2003  
WITH SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2002

	2003	2002
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ 473,164	\$ (453,117)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided (used) by operating activities:		
Depreciation and amortization	27,452	28,200
Loss on investments	13,740	168,039
(Increase) decrease in:		
Accounts receivable	50,020	53,120
Prepaid expenses	1,461	16,739
Advances	1,362	734
Increase (decrease) in:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	69,885	9,999
Deferred rent	(4,987)	(10,008)
Due to subrecipients	57,857	31,422
Deposits held in escrow	4,252	328
Net cash provided (used) by operating activities	<u>694,186</u>	<u>(156,544)</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Purchase of equipment and leasehold improvements	(25,402)	(3,559)
Purchases of investments	(10,581)	(11,745)
Proceeds from sales of investments	55,153	-
Loans made to associates	(105,000)	(26,000)
Repayment of loans by associates	98,613	39,788
Net cash provided (used) by investing activities	<u>12,783</u>	<u>(1,516)</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Net activity from lines of credit	(56,516)	74,964
Principal payments on capital lease obligation	(4,849)	(4,406)
Net cash provided (used) by financing activities	<u>(61,367)</u>	<u>70,558</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	645,602	(87,502)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	72,237	159,739
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b><u>\$ 717,839</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 72,237</u></b>
<b>SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:</b>		
Interest Paid	\$ 5,821	\$ 10,995

See accompanying notes to financial statements

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

JUNE 30, 2003

**1 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

Organization -

The ASPIRA Association, Inc. (the Association) was incorporated on November 20, 1968 in the State of New York. The Association was organized to develop and expand the educational and creative opportunities and capabilities of Puerto Rican and other Latino communities in the United States and Puerto Rico. Its mission is to empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy, education and leadership development of its youth. The Association is a non-profit organization that operates in Washington, D.C.

The Association has associate organizations in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Florida and Connecticut (the "Associates"). The Associates are separate legal entities, and the results of their financial activities are not consolidated with those of the Association.

Basis of presentation -

The accompanying financial statements are presented on the accrual basis of accounting, and in accordance with Statements of Financial Accounting Standard No. 117 "Financial Statements of Not-for-Profit Organizations".

Cash and cash equivalents -

The Association considers all cash and other highly liquid investments with initial maturities of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

At times during the year the Association maintains cash balances at financial institutions in excess of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) limits. Management believes the risk in these situations to be minimal.

Investments -

Investments are recorded at market value. Unrealized gains and losses are included in investment income in the Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets.

Equipment and leasehold improvements -

Equipment is stated at cost and is depreciated on a straight line basis over the estimated useful lives of the related assets, generally three to five years. The cost of maintenance and repairs is recorded as expenses as incurred. Leasehold improvements are recorded at cost and are amortized over the life of the lease.

Income taxes

The Association is exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Accordingly, no provision for income taxes has been made in the accompanying financial statements. The Association is not a private foundation.

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
JUNE 30, 2003

**1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND GENERAL INFORMATION**  
(Continued)

Net asset classification -

The net assets are reported in three self-balancing groups as follows

- **Unrestricted net assets** include unrestricted revenue and contributions received without donor-imposed restrictions. These net assets are available for the operation of the Association and include both internally designated and undesignated resources
- **Temporarily restricted net assets** include revenue and contributions subject to donor-imposed stipulations that will be met by the actions of the Association and/or the passage of time. When a restriction expires, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets as net assets released from restrictions
- **Permanently restricted net assets** represent funds restricted by the donor to be maintained in perpetuity by the Association

Grants and contributions

Grants and contributions are recorded as revenue in the year notification is received from the donor. Grants and contributions are recognized as unrestricted support only to the extent of actual expenses incurred in compliance with the donor-imposed restrictions and satisfaction of time restrictions. Grants and contributions received in excess of expenses incurred are shown as temporarily restricted net assets in the accompanying financial statements.

Use of estimates -

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Accordingly, actual results could differ from those estimates.

Functional allocation of expenses

The costs of providing the various programs and other activities have been summarized on a functional basis in the Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets. Accordingly, certain costs have been allocated among the programs and supporting services benefited.

Reclassification -

Certain amounts in the prior year's financial statements have been reclassified to conform to the current year's presentation.

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
JUNE 30, 2003

2. INVESTMENTS

Investments consisted of the following at June 30, 2003.

	Market Value	Cost Basis
Money market funds	\$ 42,832	\$ 42,832
Common stocks and options	610,561	598,617
Bonds	<u>264,026</u>	<u>246,414</u>
	<b>\$ 917,419</b>	<b>\$ 887,863</b>

Included in investment income are the following:

Interest and dividends	\$ 26,691
Unrealized gain	100,355
Realized loss	<u>(114,095)</u>
	<b>\$ 12,951</b>

3. TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets consisted of the following at June 30, 2003:

Education Access and Careers	\$ 902,765
Youth Leadership	<u>34,090</u>
	<b>\$ 936,855</b>

4. NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTIONS

The following temporarily restricted net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses which satisfied the restricted purposes specified by the donors.

Education Access and Careers	\$ 534,149
Youth Leadership	<u>109,152</u>
	<b>\$ 643,301</b>

5. PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Permanently restricted net assets consist of the Dewitt Wallace/Readers Digest Endowment Fund (the "Endowment Fund"). The principal is held in perpetuity under the following conditions:

- The original carrying value of the Endowment Fund was \$504,825. The Association reports the Endowment Fund investment at fair market value, which at June 30, 2003 was \$917,419. Investment income and any net gains or losses are recorded as unrestricted income in the Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets.

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
JUNE 30, 2003

5. PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS (Continued)

- The income may be expended from the general programs for the Association provided that in no event will any of the income be used for fund raising or capital improvement projects. The principal of the Endowment Fund may not be transferred to another institution by the merger, consolidation, liquidation or dissolution. In all such events and in the case of bankruptcy or receivership of the Association the Endowment Fund will revert to Community Funds, Inc. (the third party custodian that maintained custody of the funds prior to remitting the monies to the Association). Community Funds, Inc. will then in turn consult with the original donor and designate a new beneficiary of the funds.

6. COMMITMENTS

On November 20, 1995, the Association entered into an operating lease agreement for office space commencing January 1, 1996. The lease has a ten-year term and includes a rental abatement in the amount of one-half the monthly installment of the minimum annual base rent for the first ten months of the first lease year. Occupancy expense for the year ended June 30, 2003 was \$146,965.

Future minimum lease payments under this operating lease agreement are as follows:

Year Ended June 30.

2004	\$ 147,120
2005	147,120
2006	<u>73,560</u>
	<u>\$ 367,800</u>

The Association has also entered into sub-lease agreements with two unrelated organizations. During 2003, the Association received sub-lease income from these sub-tenants totaling \$13,751.

Future minimum lease receipts under sub-leases with the sub-tenants are as follows:

Year Ended June 30.

2004	\$ 62,178
2005	58,896
2006	<u>29,448</u>
	<u>\$ 150,520</u>

The Association leases a copier which is classified as a capital lease. The asset and liability under this capital lease were recorded at the present value of the future minimum lease payments. The lease expires in 2005. The cost basis of the copier and related accumulated amortization as of June 30, 2003 was \$23,323 and \$16,326, respectively.

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
JUNE 30, 2003

6. COMMITMENTS (Continued)

Following is a schedule of future minimum lease payments required under the lease as of June 30, 2003.

Year Ended June 30,

2004	\$ 5,892
2005	<u>2,946</u>
Subtotal future minimum lease payments	8,838
Less Interest	<u>(538)</u>
	8,200
Less Current portion	<u>(5,335)</u>
<b>NONCURRENT PORTION</b>	<b>\$ 2,865</b>

7. LINES OF CREDIT

The Association maintains two lines of credit at two local financial institutions. The interest rates for both credit lines are five percent at June 30, 2003. Interest of \$5,821 was paid during the year ended June 30, 2003. Both lines of credit are due during the upcoming fiscal year.

8. ~~EMPLOYEE BENEFITS~~

The Association sponsors a tax deferred annuity retirement plan, established under Internal Revenue Code Section 403(b). This Plan, which was adopted on January 1, 1987, provides for employer contributions for all salaried employees who have at least six months of service which are calculated as five percent of each eligible employee's annual compensation. Participants may also elect to contribute to the Plan a percentage of their salary on a pre-tax basis. Pension expense for the year ended June 30, 2003 was approximately \$10,000.

The Association has a deferred compensation plan under which certain employees can defer income through payroll deductions with no additional cost to the Association. These funds are invested in mutual funds and are recorded at market value together with the related liability, in the accompanying Statement of Financial Position. As of June 30, 2003, the balance of these funds totaled \$12,954.

ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
JUNE 30, 2003

**9 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS**

The Association has made the following loans to its Associates. The loans are secured by signed note agreements.

ASPIRA of Connecticut \$95,000 loan, non-interest bearing, due June 30, 2004	\$ 95,000
ASPIRA of New York, \$130,000 loan, bearing interest at 8%, due June 30, 2004	53,169
ASPIRA of Pennsylvania \$121,000 loan, bearing interest at 8%, due June 30, 2004	<u>98,127</u>
	246,296
Less Current portion	<u>(246,296)</u>
<b>NONCURRENT PORTION</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

**10. CONTINGENCY**

In previous years, the Association received grants from various agencies of the United States Government which were subject to audit under the provisions of OMB Circular A-133. The ultimate determination of amounts received under the United States Government grants is based upon the allowance of costs reported to and accepted by the United States Government as a result of the audits. Audits in accordance with the provisions of OMB Circular A-133 have been completed for all required years through fiscal year 2002. Until such audits have been accepted by the United States Government, there exists a contingency to refund any amount received in excess of allowable costs. Management is of the opinion that no material liability will result from such audits.



October 29, 2003

To the Board of Directors  
ASPIRA Association, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.

The primary purpose of our audit of the financial statements of the ASPIRA Association, Inc. (the Association) as of June 30, 2003 was to enable us to form an opinion as to the financial position of the Association at that date and its change in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended. Considering the test character of our examination, you will appreciate that reliance must be placed on adequate methods of internal control, as your principal safeguard against errors and irregularities, which a test examination may not disclose. In this letter, we are presenting for your consideration our comments and recommendations on matters which relate to the system of internal control and which came to our attention during the course of our examination.

We are aware of difficulties in attempting to establish ideal internal control, with a limited number of personnel. However, we believe that the recommendations outlined below will afford more effective internal control with a minimum of effort in those areas where the greatest weaknesses exist.

It should be noted that this letter, by its nature, is critical in that it contains only our comments and recommendations on deficiencies of internal control observed during our audit. It does not include our comments on the many strong features of the Association's system of internal control also observed.

#### PRIOR YEAR FINDINGS AND CURRENT YEAR STATUS

We reviewed the status of action taken on the findings and recommendations reported in our letter dated May 2, 2003. Presented below are our prior year findings and the current year's status.

##### Accounting Manual

**Prior Year Comment:** The Association should update its manual documenting its accounting policies and procedures. The purposes of such a manual are to ensure that proper accounting principles are being applied, that similar transactions are treated consistently, and that financial reports are produced in the form desired by management. A well-written accounting manual aids in the training of new employees and assists management in delegating and segregating duties, both of which will become increasingly important as the Association continues to grow and employ additional personnel. The process of updating the manual allows for a comprehensive review of the existing accounting system, offering management the opportunity to eliminate any dated procedures, creating a more efficient and effective system.

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**Current Year Status:** We noted that the Association updated its accounting manual as of our audit fieldwork date.

#### Timesheets

**Prior Year Comment:** During the course of our audit, we noted several timesheets that did not report actual hours spent by employees on certain programs. Instead, employees reported percentages of time spent on those programs as determined by those program budgets. Additionally, we noted several timesheets that lacked appropriate supervisory approval. Section 1 of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-122, "*Cost Principles of Non-Profit Organizations*", requires that charges to federal awards for salaries and wages, whether treated as direct costs or indirect costs, be based on documented payrolls approved by a responsible official of the organization. The distribution of salaries and wages to federal awards must be supported by personnel activity reports except when a substitute system has been approved in writing by the cognizant agency. Personnel activity reports must be maintained for all staff members (professionals and nonprofessionals) whose compensation is charged, in whole or in part, directly to federal awards. The activity reports must reflect an *after-the-fact* determination of the actual activity of each employee (budget estimates do not qualify as support for charges to federal awards). The reports must account for the total activity for which employees are compensated, must be signed by the individual employee and by a responsible supervisory official having first hand knowledge of the activities performed by the employee, that the distribution of activity represents a reasonable estimate of the actual work performed by the employee during the periods covered by the reports, and must be prepared at least monthly and must coincide with one or more pay periods. Accordingly, we strongly recommend that all employees complete timesheets for each pay period that include daily summaries of the actual hours worked on each program. Additionally, all timesheets should be completed in ink, signed by the employee and approved by a supervisor.

**Current Year Status:** Our audit revealed improvement in this area at the end of the fiscal year, when the standard timesheet template was revised by management. Additionally, the Association adjusted its total salaries expense (by program) based on actual hours percentages worked by its employees (as of the end of the fiscal year). We continue to recommend the Association ensure all timesheets are appropriately completed on a regular basis, and suggest employee time be properly recorded in the general ledger immediately after the close of each payroll period.

**Management's Response:** ASPIRA has resolved the timesheet issue since May 2003. The issue was pointed out in the 2002 audit and ASPIRA immediately began to correct the situation. However, the audit for FY 2002 took place more than seven months into the fiscal year 2003. Therefore, the timesheets for the period before the actual 2003 audit (between the end of fiscal year 2002 and the time of the actual 2003 audit) could obviously not reflect the corrections made by ASPIRA. All ASPIRA staff members have been recording their time based on actual hours worked on each program. In addition, timesheets are monitored by the Finance Department for accuracy and all time has been properly recorded in the general ledger every payroll period. In addition, as recommended by the auditors in 2002, the staff has received instructions and training on the actual required by each to dedicate to each program and on the proper way of recording time on timesheets.

### Expense Documentation

**Prior Year Comment:** During the course of our audit, we noted that certain disbursements were not properly supported with appropriate documentation. We also noted certain credit card charges related to employee travel, were not supported by sufficient backup documentation (i.e. canceled airline tickets and original credit card receipts). In order to improve controls over employee travel expenses, we recommend the Association review its expense reimbursement authorization procedures to ensure that all expenses are properly supported with appropriate documentation, reviewed and properly approved prior to payment.

**Current Year Status:** We noted certain disbursements which lacked sufficient supervisory approval. We also noted certain expense account classifications (indicated on approved check requisition forms) that did not agree with the actual posting in the general ledger. We continue to recommend the Association ensure that all expenses are properly supported with appropriate documentation, reviewed and properly approved prior to payment.

**Management's Response:** It should be noticed that, different from the prior year, back up documentation exists for all expenditures and this issue was not raised this year. Existing expenditure policy states that the President is the only person authorized to incur all expenditures and all expenditures require the President's approval. All expenditures are to be made through a purchase request which is approved by the President prior to the purchase. Once the purchase is made, the President authorized payment via a check. The President does not sign a check without the proper check requisition form personally reviewed and signed by the President. The staff has been trained again on the purchasing procedure to ensure the policy and procedure is followed.

Current policy also calls for agreement between the account classifications on the check requisition and the general ledger. This issue has been discussed with finance personnel and has been resolved.

### Expense Allocation

**Prior Year Comment:** Our audit disclosed that a significant number of disbursements are charged to the Association's various programs in the general ledger based on percent allocations pre-determined by management. We strongly recommend that the Association properly charge all costs to appropriate programs based on actuals.

**Current Year Status:** We did not note this condition during our current year audit.

### Canceled Checks

**Prior Year Comment:** During the course of our audit, we noted certain canceled checks which did not have a date typed on the face of the check. We strongly recommend all checks be carefully examined for completeness prior to being issued.

**Current Year Status:** We did not note this condition during our current year audit.

## CURRENT YEAR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### American Express Credit Card

#### *Employee Fraud -*

We were informed of an instance of employee fraud which resulted in a loss of approximately \$12,000, all of which was subsequently recovered through the Association's insurance company. The fraud occurred from an employee who obtained an American Express (AMEX) card under the company's corporate account. Fraudulent credit card charges were made over the course of approximately five months and were undetected because this former employee was responsible for receiving the incoming mail and was able to intercept the monthly AMEX statements. Since the monthly AMEX statements were paid on a direct debit basis, there was no delay in payment, however the expenses were not recorded in the general ledger during the course of these months. After this matter was finally uncovered, the employee was terminated and the AMEX direct debit payment system was not continued. As a result of this experience, we strongly recommend the Association consider canceling the AMEX account. We suggest all employees who travel regularly be issued an advance, approved by the appropriate individual, and accounted for in the employee's expense report. Any additional costs incurred either in cash or on the employee's personal credit card should be reimbursed to the extent the costs are supported with appropriate documentation and have been deemed reasonable by the authorized supervisor. We also recommend all expenses be recorded in the general ledger within a timely period following the close of every month.

#### *Credit Card Activity -*

Our review of the American Express card activity disclosed instances of missing backup documentation supporting certain purchases. We also experienced difficulty in determining where certain individual credit card charges were expensed to accounts/sub accounts in the general ledger. We strongly recommend all original receipts be submitted by all employees who have a company credit card. We also recommend the full general ledger coding be evident next to each transaction in each monthly statement, along with a summary of all monthly charges by nature, category and program to be charged to the general ledger.

**Management's Response:** It should be noticed that the instance of unauthorized expenditures was discovered and that action, including legal action, was taken immediately upon uncovering these actions, including the immediate termination of the employee, reporting the incident to authorities and full recovery of the funds. Though the unauthorized expenditures were made, showing that internal controls certainly need strengthening, these unauthorized expenditures were detected, albeit belatedly. The employee was able to secure a charge card in her name from American Express without the authorization of the card-holder (the President), which American Express has been unable to explain. The lag in accounting, due to a year long transition of accountants allowed that a period of time passed before the discovery.

The following remedies have been put in place to ensure proper controls

- a) As mentioned, the direct debit system of payment was discontinued immediately. Payment is now made via check issues after thorough review of the monthly statement.
- b) The monthly statement is now received directly by the President (who opens the statement) before processing.
- c) The two staff who have a charge card have been instructed once again that all expenditures on the American Express card (as all other purchases) must be authorized prior to the purchase.
- d) We are in the process of canceling the American Express card and securing another card issued under our collaboration with CitiBank, which should remedy the issue of the laxity of American Express in issuing cards to employees

Regarding the recommendation that the charge card be canceled in favor of cash advances, the recommendation seems impractical. First, only three officers are authorized to have credit cards, the President and two Vice Presidents. Second, staff travel are encouraged to request cash advances when practical. However, checks cannot be issued to airlines or hotels for reservations or payment, for example, and it would burden staff, even if they had personal credit cards to require them to have one and use it for these purposes. Third, a significant portion of the use of the cards is for Board travel. Without a card, each member would have to make his/her own arrangements, pay expenses and be reimbursed, which is a burden on the board. We believe that we currently have the controls in place that will prevent situations like this one to happen in the future.

Regarding back-up charge card documentation, the two staff who have cards and the Director of Finance have been instructed that documentation is required for every expense. It is our current practice to full ledger code each transaction on the statement to facilitate the identification of the category or program to which each expense is charged and to reconcile with the general ledger.

#### Reconciliation of Balance Sheet Accounts

##### Deferred Compensation Plan -

We noted that the general ledger accounts that support the balance of the deferred compensation plan were not adjusted at any point during the fiscal year. We recommend all monthly account statements be forwarded to accounting in order to properly account for the monthly mutual fund activity.

##### Investments (Margin Account) -

We noted that one of the Association's investment accounts contains a margin account with a balance that fluctuates on a monthly basis, however, this balance had not been adjusted at any point during the fiscal year. We recommend the margin account balance be reconciled with the general ledger on a monthly basis.

#### Investments (Original Cost Basis Information) -

We noted that the cost basis of the Association's investments is not tracked on a regular basis. As a result, unrealized gains and losses experienced due to market fluctuations cannot be accurately calculated. We suggest the Association reconcile the cost basis of its investments on a quarterly basis. This reconciliation will allow management to assess the performance of its investments on a regular basis. Additionally, this reconciliation will help management identify how the realized gains and losses on sales of securities are reported in its monthly investment statements.

**Management's Response:** We agree with these recommendations. For the fiscal years ended '99, '00, '01, Soza & Company audited the Association, and they requested we maintain the reconciliation for investments under a different method which showed the accounting for investments on a market to market basis. The working paper they provided to facilitate this activity has not been sufficient for what is now needed, and we will incorporate a new method of reconciliation that will allow to recognize gains and losses on a monthly basis.

#### Adjusting Journal Entries/Reclassifications

Our results of our audit produced an excessive number of adjusting and reclassifying journal entries. Additionally, management presented us with several adjusting journal entries during the course of our audit. We recommend the Association carefully review its financial statements on a regular basis and examine the composition of its accounts. This review will allow management to identify erroneously recorded activity during the course of the year thus resulting in reliable interim financial statements and minimum adjusting entries at the close of the fiscal cycle.

**Management's Response:** Reclassification of entries occurred prior to the time this audit was conducted due to last year soft costs that were incorrectly coded and entered into the general ledger, there were six months of entries due to the temporary operating budget for fiscal year 2002/2003. We also found it necessary to develop additional, post closing journal entries as a result of working through additional testing of accounts receivable and loan receivables from affiliates during the audit, also some adjusting entries were handled by the auditing team as a result of their knowledge of financial statement adjustments needed for amortization, depreciation, etc.

#### Grants Receivable

Our audit of the Association's receivables revealed certain balances that have not been collected for several months. We suggest all aged receivables be researched and written-off if deemed uncollectible.

**Management's Response:** All grants receivable have been collected and a system has been developed to track receivables to ensure collection in a timely manner. Old receivables have been researched and collected.

### Temporarily Restricted Net Assets

Our audit of the Association's donor-restricted funding revealed a significant number of unexpended grant balances with little or no activity in the last fiscal year. Assuming the purpose of the program has been accomplished (or the grant period has expired), we recommend the Association contact each donor to request the grant balance be released from restrictions and applied to a similar program. The release of these funds will allow the Association to continue its programmatic efforts in the upcoming fiscal years. If this suggestion is not achievable, we suggest the balance of all aged donor balances be refunded to the respective donor.

**Management's Response:** The small balances in the grants are being expended as grant activity in these programs continues. These programs should be closed within this fiscal year. It is the policy of the ASPIRA to request carry-overs from the donor whenever balances remain after the end of the last program year.

### Related Party Transactions

We noted that the Association has experienced difficulty in reconciling its outstanding receivables and related loans to its ASPIRA Associates. Our audit disclosed discrepancies between amounts recorded in the Association's general ledger with amounts provided by the Affiliates in confirmation letters sent directly to us and Affiliate audit reports issued by other independent audit firms. We recommend all financial activity with the Affiliates be reconciled on a quarterly basis. We also suggest that loans made to Affiliates be reviewed regularly to ensure they are properly repaid to the Association in a timely manner.

**Management's Response:** The balances of outstanding loans have been reconciled with each Associate and are now reconciled quarterly. A follow up system has been put in place to ensure timely collection and determining accrued interest. Tracking of loans had been difficult given the number of loans, changes in the loan agreements, the nature of the loan (duration), the changes in accountant, and the number of accounts from which the loans have been drawn. The new system should resolve this tracking issue as well.

The Association has requested an Association wide line of credit to consolidate the source of all loans to Associates. If approved by the board, this should streamline these processes in the next year.

### Check Disbursements

We noted that check numbers printed on the Association's checks did not always agree with numbers printed during the actual check run. Additionally, we noted certain computer generated check numbers which were printed on more than one check. We also noted a significant percentage of voided checks during the course of our random sampling of disbursements. Lastly, we noted several batches of unused checks (with varying number ranges) in the accountant's office that result in large sequential gaps during check runs. We suggest the Association identify the cause of these situations and create solutions which will eliminate these conditions in the forthcoming fiscal year.

**Management's Response:** This happened due to hardware failure, and the problem has been resolved by replacing the damaged printer. Also, we assigned a printer solely for check runs, so this situation will not occur in the forthcoming fiscal year.

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We wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the cooperation extended to us by the management and staff of ASPIRA Association, Inc. during the course of our audit. If you desire any further explanation or clarification on any of the points discussed above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

GELMAN, ROSENBERG & FREEDMAN



Terri P. Marrs  
Certified Public Accountant







**ASPIRA STRATEGIC PLAN 2004 – 2008**  
**PRIORITIES IN BOLD**  
February, 2004



AREAS	ACTIVITIES				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>FACILITIES</b>	Financing for School Facilities (IL, FL, PA, PR.)	Plan Capital Campaigns Enhance technology in schools	Implement Capital Campaigns		→
<b>SCHOOLS</b>	Organize Council of Principals Promote sharing of curriculum Best practices Develop national Teacher Prof Dev Plan	Develop assessment & accountability tools Accreditation (IL, PR)	Implement assessment & accountability tools Accreditation (IL, PR)		→
<b>PROGRAMS</b>	Financial Education Initiative (basic, insurance, pilot entrepreneurship)  Revise APEX Curriculum  National Communications System for all ASPIRA Clubs	Fin. Ed. - Home/auto ownership Research framework for programs CTC Sustainability Plan Develop National Data system on all programs Implement 4 part leadership program in all Clubs	Financial Ed. National implementation  Implement framework Implement CTC Plan		→
<b>EXPANSION</b>	Continue to support efforts in Delaware Support local expansion where feasible		Seek expansion in two states		→
<b>PUBLIC POLICY</b>	Public Policy Web Site Policy Priorities Higher Education Act (TRIO); No Child Left Behind implementation Develop local advocacy training plan Address national technology policy Address immigration proposals	Public Policy Advocacy curriculum for youth Public Policy Training for senior staff State issues: NCLB Act AmeriCorps Policy Priority: Health	Implement Public Policy training for youth  Policy Priorities: No Child Left Behind reauthorization		→

AREAS	ACTIVITIES				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
CULTURE LANGUAGE	Expand IPRAC web resources Conduct one cultural event	Ciudad intelectual-Aprende Español One national cultural event Promote cultural exchange programs in P.R. for Aspirantes	One national cultural event Promote cultural exchange programs in P.R. for Aspirantes	One national cultural event Promote cultural Exchange programs in P.R for Aspirantes	One national cultural event Promote cultural Exchange programs in P.R for Aspirantes
COLLABORATIONS	National Positioning as Lead Nat Organization UPR Collaboration, promote admissions at UPR Cayey, Teacher programs Enhance current collaborations	Expand Telocentros Institute Promote focal Collaborations (collaboratives design)	Focus on local collaborations		
TECHNOLOGY	Migrate to Active Directory Tech. Council Training Tech. Training of non-tech staff	Expand trainings to non tech staff Develop cadre of local tech leaders			
GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT	Boards Survey Fully implement MIS (2 sites)	Board Training (2) MIS (3 sites) Associate Review (Standards 2 Assoc) Comp Staff Dev (4 year plan)	Board Training (2) MIS (2) Associate Review (Standards 2 Assoc)	Board Training (2) National Study Associate Review (Standards 2 Assoc)	Associate Review (1)



# **Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association 2003-2008**

**Submitted to the  
National Board of Directors  
August, 2003**

**Ronald Blackburn-Moreno  
President**

# STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE ASPIRA ASSOCIATION

## 2003-2008

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# **Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association 2003-2008**

**A Guide to Action for the ASPIRA Association**

**August 2003**

## **PREFACE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past five years, the course and programs of the ASPIRA Association have been guided by the first Association wide Strategic Plan ever developed, that was approved by the National Board of Directors in January 1998. This first *ASPIRA Association Strategic Plan 1998-2003*, developed through extensive discussion and consensus of all the ASPIRA Associates was a milestone in the development of ASPIRA as a national association. It brought together the Association in a single direction, while strengthening the autonomy of each Associate. Most importantly, it set forth the reaffirmation by all of the of the ASPIRA movement, of a series of principles that are at the core of the movement: a) ASPIRA's mission and ultimate goal of promoting the development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy and the education and leadership development of its youth, b) the fact that while ASPIRA's rich tradition stems from its beginnings as a Puerto Rican organization and that it should remain a Puerto Rican organization, it is an inclusive organization, serving youth from the entire and diverse- Latino community, c) the crucial importance of our Puerto Rican and Latino culture and language and the need to preserve and promote them in and outside our communities, and d) the core of the ASPIRA organization, as a youth-focused

and youth-directed movement, are the ASPIRA Clubs and that its basic youth development strategy remains the time-tested ASPIRA Process

The Plan called for a series of initiatives, including new programs in youth development, a technology initiative, strengthening and expansion of ASPIRA schools, an organizational development drive, enhanced efforts in fund raising, financial stability and advocacy, and expansion of current program models. ASPIRA has made significant strides in each of these areas over the past five years. Though all aspects of the plan were addressed, certainly not all of the objectives of the Plan were fully attained. Conditions and priorities changed in some cases, and funding did not become available in others. Overall, however, the success of the Association in setting and its progress over the past five years has been significant, and due, to a large extent, on the organizational cohesion, consensus on purpose, and collaboration that is reflected in, and emerged from, the Strategic Plan. Some especially significant gains have been made in further developing of ASPIRA schools, expansion of services to youth, development of new youth development model programs, and the strides made in incorporating state-of-the-art technology into all aspects of ASPIRA's operations and providing access to technology and technology training in our communities and across the country. ASPIRA has become recognized nationally as the largest national Latino organization in the country, as well, as the leader in technology among Latino and non-Latino non-profit organizations. Moreover, ASPIRA has become a center for dissemination of Puerto Rican culture and language through its IPRAC initiative.

We now enter a new five year cycle. It is again time to engage in a major effort to re-analyze the environment both internal and external in which the Association operates, and the Association's course, priorities and programs to address the needs of our communities and youth. Again, the process of developing the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 set forth here, is an effort directed not only at systematically addressing the needs of our communities and youth, but at further building ASPIRA as a national movement.

## CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document includes the long term goals and objectives of the Association, the general objectives for the next five years and specific strategies and initiative being proposed to be implemented during this period. Goals and general strategies are set forth in each of the following areas: Fund Development, Programs, Advocacy, Management, Technology, Collaborations, and Expansion.

An extensive Appendix is included as well that contains the Basic Principles of the of ASPIRA upon which the plan is based, ASPIRA's mission and a description of an ASPIRANTE and a description of the Strategic Process itself. This information in this appendix was agreed upon during the last strategic planning process and has not been reconsidered or altered since that time.

## THE CONTEXT

As ASPIRA enters its fourth decade, the three overriding issues it will face for the in the next few years will be: a) the dramatic downturn in the U.S. and global economy and what is projected to be a very long and slow pace of economic recovery, and b) the explosive growth of the Latino population in the United States now recognized to be the largest minority in the country and the increasing diversity, both ethnically and economically of the Puerto Ricans and Latino community, and c) the potential impact on Latino students of the national education reform movement, with higher standards, and especially high stakes testing, considering the lack of resources for students to meet the higher standards and perform well in state tests.

### **The Downturn in the Economy**

The impact that the economic downturn has had, and will continue to have, on our communities, government, the corporate world, and of course, on non-profit organizations, is already and will continue to be the single most important factor in ASPIRA's continued stability and growth over the next five years. The unemployment rate remains high and of course even higher in the Latino community. Governments federal, state and local are running enormous deficits and are making massive cuts in programs and services. State and local governments especially, on which ASPIRA depends to a very large degree, and that are obligated to balance their budgets, have been the hardest hit. The federal government is running a projected deficit of over \$400 billion, which will mean significant reductions in funding for such areas as education

(in spite of the rhetoric in support of education reform and more federal aid to help children and youth meet higher education standards), health and other social services. Corporations have seen profits drop significantly, along with the consequences of serious corporate excesses in the past decade, meaning significant reductions in corporate support for social causes. National, regional, and local foundations, which depend mostly on endowments, have seen their assets diminish and their grant making reduced to a significant degree. Most concur that this economic environment will persist for the next few years at least, posing a long term threat to the work of non-profits and even their financial future. ASPIRA, as most organizations, is not immune to this threat. We are already experiencing cuts in programs and services reductions at several Associates. ASPIRA must develop a sound and long term strategy to address the shortage of funds that it will experience and to seek to ensure that each Associate can ensure its future. This will require creative alternatives to traditional modes of obtaining income as well as enhanced efficiency in its operations.

### **Growth and Diversity of the Latino Population**

The dramatic growth and the diversity of the Latino population pose a challenge as well as an opportunity. The Latino population is growing across the country at rates that only now are being formally recognized. There are now 42.6 million Latinos in the U.S. The challenge posed by this growth to ASPIRA is two fold. On the one hand, the segment of this population that requires the types of services that ASPIRA offers youth is growing exponentially<sup>1</sup>, without a commensurate increase in services in schools and other social institutions. Schools across the country are experiencing sometimes doubling of the Latino youth population each year. Thousands of schools are majority Latino. Many of these students are limited English proficient, recent immigrant, and come from low income households where parents have a poor education themselves and are ill afford involvement in schools. Second, the Latino population is shifting geographically faster than ever. Latinos are now dispersing throughout the country to areas where Latinos could not be found before rural and even areas in the mid west and south-east, in the south and in new areas in the north east. But this migration is not only the resettling of immigrants. As the Latino population becomes more diverse economically as well with more enjoying a higher standard of living, significant shifts are taking place within the cities served by ASPIRA and others, where Latinos are either moving to suburbs or are moving to other areas.

within the cities. An example of the first is the rapid growth of the Puerto Rican population in places like Orlando, FL and San Antonio, TX, and the numbers of Latinos in places like Delaware, Idaho, North Carolina and Washington, DC. Many of the youth and families that are relocating are not the well-to-do Latinos, but families that are in dire need of programs and services such as those offered by ASPIRA. An example of the latter is the shifts in Latino population from the cities to suburbs, in many cases pushed by the gentrification of the inner cities. This poses the challenge of reaching low income Latino youth who are now not concentrated in areas within cities. How can ASPIRA address the growth and reaching this shifting population?

The Latino population is also growing *ethnically more diverse*. Puerto Ricans, considering those in Puerto Rico, comprise only 9% of the Latino population, vs. 66.1% Mexican, 14.5% Central and South American, 4% Cuban and 6.5% "other". This poses the challenge to ASPIRA which ASPIRA has been facing for some time- of balancing its services to Puerto Ricans vs. non-Puerto Ricans, the content of its cultural identity programs and others.

Finally, the diversity of the Latino population is growing in its *economic diversity* as well. There are now hundreds of thousands of Latinos who are well-educated and in the middle and upper class. This can best be seen in the exponential growth of Latino professional organizations and the growth in Latino businesses. There are over 1.8 million Latino-owned businesses in the U.S., with over \$200 billion in revenues. The purchasing power of the Latino community, both because of its growth and increasing wealth, is over \$650 billion per year. The challenge to ASPIRA here is to direct the increased wealth in the Latino community back into the community, not only in investment but in service to the community.

The growth of the Latino population and its growing wealth also presents a unique opportunity. More than ever before, the Latino community is receiving the attention of every segment of the population. Corporate America, political leaders and policy makers across the country are now focusing on the Latino community, either as a source of revenue, future workforce or as a source of votes. It is incumbent upon Latino organizations, including ASPIRA, to take full advantage of the enormous publicity and attention that the Latino community is receiving to increase both our political influence and the support of corporations and foundations for the organization and its work.

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Latinos are the youngest segment of the U.S. population and they are now the fastest growing of any group. A full 36% of Latinos are under 18 years of age.

### The Impact of Education Reform

For over a decade, the education reform movement in the U.S. has moved toward imposing higher standards for all students, fundamental changes in the way children are taught, shifts in funding to promote reform, and alternative solutions to low performing schools, including the privatization of schools, vouchers and others. Latinos and Latino organization favor higher standards and that all children meet them. The issue has always been that reaching higher standards require the resources for children and youth to meet them. the equally resourced schools, better teachers, more bilingual teachers, more after school help for students, more parent involvement programs, among others. These resources have not been forthcoming whether from school districts, states or the Federal Government. While reform moves forward, ever pressing schools with high Latino enrollments, the resources have not been there to for our children to succeed.

Two critical factors have now been added to the reform equation that will have a devastating effect on Latino children and youth: the *No Child Left Behind Act* and the economic crisis facing districts, states and the federal government. The *No Child Left Behind Act* imposes on states, for the first time, assessments with a stringent accountability system. Few schools in Latino communities, most of which lack the resources, will not be considered "failing" as a result of these requirements with devastating effects on these schools. Many will most likely be closed and absorbed by others. Others will lose resources including their best teachers- rather than gaining them.

Now, states are imposing exit exams on high school graduates, the ultimate form of "high stakes test." The consequence of imposing these tests which measure achievement that our students have no resources to attain- will be equally devastating, resulting in an enormous number of Latino students unable to graduate from high school and unable to go on to college. Most importantly, they will lead to an ever increasing drop-out rate of our youth, that remains at over 40%- unacceptable.

The consequences of the reform movement and especially of testing, pose a two-pronged challenge for ASPIRA: a) the advocacy necessary to ensure that our students are not, once again, left behind, and b) to help provide our students with the assistance they need to meet the higher standards or to provide alternative educational pathways for them, such as technical training, which can lead to high paying jobs.

## **The Condition of the Puerto Rican and Latino Community**

As stated in the *Strategic Plan 1998-2003* the Puerto Rican and Latino reality that we find today in our communities is fundamentally different from the one in which ASPIRA was founded almost four decades ago. The basic statement of five years ago remains true: "The globalization of the economy -dominated by extraordinary and rapidly changing technology- have radically transformed the nature of work and the workplace. The knowledge and skills that our youth will need to succeed in this new economy are very different from those that our first ASPIRANTES required, and demand profound changes in the education they receive. In many of our Puerto Rican and Latino communities, as well as in communities in Puerto Rico, economic development has seriously lagged. Conditions for many Puerto Ricans in U.S. cities, even after almost 50 years, have worsened rather than improved, and the economic gap is widening rather than narrowing. Poverty in our inner city communities remains pervasive and with it, the lack of decent education, housing and access to health care."

The low educational attainment of Puerto Rican and Latino youth, the exceedingly dropout rate, the growing disparities in achievement between Latinos and non-Latinos, the stagnant college participation and graduation rates- remain the worst of any group in the country. Schools are re-segregating and with it, our children end up in the worst schools -that qualified and committed teachers, high quality educational resources and the safe, nurturing environment all students need to achieve.

In a time when the knowledge and skills our youth need to compete and succeed are growing exponentially, and when there is much being said about raising standards and world class achievement, a significant number of Puerto Rican and Latino youth cannot attain academically at even minimally acceptable levels.

Political realities have also changed drastically, deeply affecting social and economic policies that are already having a dramatic impact on our communities. Equity and inclusion are no longer viewed by a growing number of Americans as a legitimate rationale for social intervention, threatening programs that we had taken for granted and which have been critical to whatever little progress we have made, such as Affirmative Action, Bilingual Education and social assistance. Even with the recent Supreme Court decision affirming the legitimacy of Affirmative Action, there is a strong movement to remove a consideration of race and ethnicity from consideration in education and other aspects of society.

In addition to the demographic growth discussed above, in our communities, we now have a second, third and even fourth generation of Puerto Ricans and Latinos -born and raised in our cities- who have very different values and who face a host of very different challenges, than those of the 50's, 60's and 70's

Finally, there are a series of negative factors in the environment our youth live in that continue to have serious effects. Health issues, including HIV/AIDS and teen pregnancy, remain a problem for a significant number of young people. Gangs and violence in and out of school are still a major problem for Latino youth. There is still a lack of effective parental engagement in the education of young people in the Latino community, which is so necessary especially now given the pressures on youth stemming from the education reform movement. Many of our youth lack basic life skills, such as personal finance skills.

These challenges are still the main ones ASPIRA will be facing in the next five years and that this Plan must address.

#### **ASPIRA's Organizational Context**

ASPIRA's development over the past 42 years was extensively discussed in the last strategic plan. Here, it suffices to focus on the organizational context as it has evolved in the last five years. Perhaps the most crucial developments in the past five years have been the reaffirmation and continued focus on the organization's core mission and goals, its internal organizational and programmatic growth, its increased national, state and local visibility and influence, and the stability and growth of its Associate offices. ASPIRA has not faced an organizational or financial crisis in the past five years, a sign that the organization remains strong.

Nationally, ASPIRA has become the main Puerto Rican, in fact, one of the main Latino organizations in the country. As mentioned, ASPIRA is now the largest national Latino organization in the country. It has the national prestige and recognition within and outside our communities in each of its states, as well as nationally- that few other Latino organizations enjoy. This is evidenced by the numerous awards and recognitions ASPIRA has received, including the prestigious Leadership Award by Independent Sector. With it, and through its decades of strong advocacy for our youth, it has gained power and influence to shape policy and to secure funding. Its network of national collaborators- government agencies at the national and state levels, Latino and non-Latino community organizations, higher education institutions- has expanded dramatically in every state. In many states ASPIRA has expanded to cities other than their main sede. All Associates have expanded their operations.

Among many of the specific gains in the past five years have been:

- the financial stabilization of Associates that had confronted financial difficulties,
- the stabilization of the organization's leadership, providing continuity and organizational strength as well as the strengthening of local boards of directors,
- strengthening and expansion of programs, especially of ASPIRA-operated schools,
- creation of technical training programs at several Associates with the others poised to begin programs,
- the expansion of the ASPIRA leadership program through a four-component curriculum,
- the development or expansion of a series of model programs, including ASPIRA's parental engagement model, a mentoring model, math and science, among others that are now being implemented throughout the Association as well as by other organizations and which have gained significant national recognition,
- significant advances in use of technology Association-wide, and growth of community technology centers that provide access to technology to thousands in our communities,
- the development of training models for staff, as well as technology-based administrative tools,
- two highly successful national conferences carried out each year, organized by ASPIRA of NJ
- a focus on developing partnerships that has resulted in a multitude of new national, state and local partners that enhance the organization's capacity to provide services,
- continued focus on promoting Puerto Rican and Latino culture and Spanish, through which ASPIRA has become a major source of information on Puerto Rican culture nationally

### **Major Challenges: 2003-2008**

Within the broader context of the challenges faced by the Puerto Rican Latino community and the organizational context in which ASPIRA finds itself, the Association will face very specific challenges over the next five years that constitute the basis for the initiatives and programs it undertakes. The specific challenges are:

### **Financial Stability and Growth**

ASPIRA faces some very serious challenges over the next five years. The most critical of these will be to sustain itself and to grow financially. The current economic conditions are not promising. Over the next five years, ASPIRA will have to seek very creative ways of obtaining the resources it needs to maintain its operations, to grow if possible, and to assure its financial future. These should certainly include

- extensive efforts in fund-raising from traditional sources (government, foundations, and corporations, with a focus on corporations) expanding the list of potential funders,
- engaging in various forms of "profit making" ventures, including fee-for-service contracts, developing for profit arms, and developing programs that generate excess revenue (such as the Cisco Academies), and
- seeking financial arrangements and instruments that take advantage of the full power of the resources of the Association as a whole to generate additional income, such as Association wide agreements with financial institutions (e.g., lines of credit).

Developing all of these strategies will certainly require close collaboration and communication among the Associates, including the National Office. However, they will also require that ASPIRA focus on developing a truly national, comprehensive, **communications strategy** to ensure that what ASPIRA does and represents is well known across the country. A major focus of the effort in the years to come will be on developing such a communications strategy.

### **Facilities**

As ASPIRA develops more charter schools and expands programs, the lack of adequate facilities has become a major challenge for several Associates. In several cases, including ASPIRA of Florida and ASPIRA of Illinois, the lack of resources for facilities has even been an impediment to growth. The acquisition of facilities and/or expansion of current facilities, because of its financial impact, is a major challenge that will need to be forcefully addressed in the next several years through a combination of fund-raising and financing alternatives.

### **ASPIRA Schools**

ASPIRA Charter schools will be facing probably the most serious challenge to date over the next five years. As education reform and high stakes assessments become mandates, these

schools will be increasingly held accountable for student achievement and success. This will require that students in these schools meet the higher standards, which in turn will require additional resources in curriculum, materials, better teachers, special programs, among others. ASPIRA is already facing challenges in its schools. Many students in ASPIRA schools are not performing to the levels required and there is a deep concern that as requirements get more stringent, the schools will be placed at risk. This will require a major focus of attention in the years to come, especially as new ASPIRA Charter schools are opened.

A second challenge will be the movement to operate more advanced technical schools, even technical colleges. These technical colleges not only provide expanded opportunities for our youth, in some cases as alternatives to high school or even college, but have the potential of becoming sources of revenue for Associates as has been the case of ASPIRA de Puerto Rico. These include the Cisco Academies and the technical programs that Associates have added on to these, and even the more formal efforts of ASPIRA Illinois to start both a technical high school and a junior technical college. The challenge for these schools over the next five years will be the need to ensure that the Associates have the facilities, technology and staff to ensure their success.

## **ASPIRA Programs**

### Research Based Programs and Evidence of Success

ASPIRA has a host of successful programs that it has operated for years. However, as funders become more selective in the projects and programs that they fund especially given that they are funding fewer programs, these are already beginning to seek evidence of performance or that the programs that they fund be based on sound research that proves their effectiveness. ASPIRA will be challenged to either demonstrate the effectiveness of its programs through research or to implement programs that have already been proven effective. The challenge over the next five years will be to demonstrate that the time-tested ASPIRA programs—leadership development, tutoring, mentoring, parent engagement, after school enrichment—are in fact effective in reducing the drop-out rate and increasing student achievement. ASPIRA will be increasingly pressed to scientific research on these programs.

### Expansion of Programs and Services

A second challenge that ASPIRA will be facing in this area is its capacity to reach larger number of students. Even at the current rate of 35,000 students per year, ASPIRA is still reaching a relatively small group of Latino youth. Expansion of programs, of course, will depend on funding. However, as funding remains tight, efforts must focus on creative ways of expanding the

delivering services, without a significant increase in the infrastructure required to sustain these programs. This will mean aga.n, focusing on collaborations w.th other organ.zations as a means of reaching more youth.

#### Current Programs and New Initiatives

ASPIRA has several model programs that it has not ful.y implemented, other that require revision, and several others that are being developed to address special needs of youth in our communities. The first include the newly expanded Youth Leadership Program with its Entrepreneurship and Community Leadership components. The expanded program provides a much broader leadership development training to young people than the previous program which focused a.most exclusively on public policy. Efforts shou.d be made to ful.y implement these programs. Other programs, such as the APEX program, are already in need of revision, especially in light of the new trends in education reform. Finally, there are several initiatives that are already being developed to strengthen ASPIRA's complement of programs to address "env.ironmental" factors affecting youth, such as a Financial Education Initiative, a Mentoring program and a highway safety education initiative.

#### Sharing Results

Over the past severa. years, ASPIRA Associates have developed a series of programs locally that have had a significant impact in 6the.r communities. The high-tech academies are an example. Much can be gained by a.l Associates if mechanisms were in place to share these further among the Associates.

#### **Expansion**

Severa. ASPIRA Associates have expanded their operations in state to serve a larger population. ASPIRA of New Jersey, ASPIRA de Puerto R.co, ASPIRA of Florida and ASPIRA of Connecticut, have a.l opened offices or programs around the state. However, ASPIRA has not formally expanded outside the six states and Puerto R.co since the incorporation of ASPIRA of Connecticut 12 years ago. The reasons for not expanding are mostly ASPIRA's strategy that demand local community leadership to establish an ASPIRA, self sufficiency in funding and a commitment to sustain the effort locally.

For the first time in over a decade there is a serious attempt by Puerto Rican community leaders in the state of Delaware to establish a statewide ASPIRA organ.zation. The National Board has mandated that this group continue its efforts to organize with technical assistance from the

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nations, office. The challenge in this case will be to ensure that the initiative is adequately promoted and is successful, guarding the ASPIRA name.

### **Public Policy**

The two main public policy challenges for ASPIRA over the next several years will be in the areas of education reform and funding for schools and after school programs. The impact of No Child Left Behind, with its mandates for assessment, coupled with the lack of funding to support reform, will dominate the education debate both at the federal and state levels. But funding for schools is not enough. ASPIRA recognized that out-of school programs are extremely important to addressing the drop out rate and increasing college going among Latino students. ASPIRA must continue to be an advocate for funding of these programs in the midst of cuts at both the Federal and state levels. Another major issue will be the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act next year. ASPIRA is heavily dependent on HEA programs for funding its outreach initiatives including talent Search and Upward Bound. ASPIRA must be a strong voice in this debate. The attacks on Affirmative Action are expected to intensify, even as the Supreme Court reaffirmed the legality of Affirmative Action programs. ASPIRA should also be attentive to this debate.

### **Cultural Awareness and Use of Spanish**

Cultural awareness and use of the Spanish language is still a major issue in the Puerto Rican and Latino community generally, especially among youth. Youth are still yearning to become more aware of their history and cultural background and *ASPIRANTES* have consistently pressed for ASPIRA to seek ways of helping them learn or improve their Spanish. The promotion of Puerto Rican and Latino culture at ASPIRA was given a boost in the past five years with the creation of the Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture and the development of a significant Internet portal on Puerto Rican history and culture. However, continued efforts are required, especially promoting the use of Spanish.

### **Governance and Management**

The last Strategic Plan did not address ASPIRA governance. However, over the past five years, almost all of the Associates have recognized the need for board training in various areas including Board Duties and Responsibilities, Strategic Planning, and ASPIRA history and processes. This became evident as soon as the last Strategic Plan was released when Associates

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started developing their local strategic plans. As a result, almost all Associates' boards have engaged in some kind of training.

During the next five years, efforts to train and provide technical assistance to ASPIRA boards, especially given the changes that naturally occur in board membership, should be intensified to ensure all Associates have strong and effective boards of directors.

ASPIRA has made significant progress in its management, accounting and other fiscal processes and procedures. All Associates have successfully integrated technology into their fiscal operations and have sound staff in these areas. As a result, there have been no major issues regarding finance or fiscal operations at any Associate. An indicator of this success has been that all Associates have their audits almost up to date.

However, one of the major aspects of the 1998-2003 plan was the objective of developing and implementing a set of standards. The ASPIRA Standards of Excellence were developed as a result, along with an agreement on conducting period self assessments and reviews of ASPIRA operations. The process was never operationalized, mostly because of shifts in priorities.

A sound self-assessment process is indispensable to ensure that each Associate is effective and to guarantee quality programs and management.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE ASPIRA ASSOCIATION 2003-2008**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Strategic Plan is a guide for the planning and development of the ASPIRA Association for the next five years. It includes the long term goals and objectives of the Association.

Goals and general strategies are set forth in each of the following areas:

➤ Fund Development	➤ Management
➤ Programs	➤ Technology
➤ Advocacy	➤ Collaborations
	➤ Expansion

Technology and Collaborations are presented separately even though each supports the other areas and run throughout ASPIRA's operations, whether it be fund-raising, programs or advocacy. Technology has played, and continues to play, a central role at ASPIRA, from providing community access through the CTCs, to technology training and support in schools, to the use of technology in ASPIRA's management. Over the past five years, the strategy of engaging in constructive collaborations with a host of national, local and state-wide organizations has enabled ASPIRA to increase the reach of its programs, enhance funding for programs, and significantly enhance its advocacy. Expansion is treated separately because of the specific expansion efforts by the Puerto Rican and Latino communities in Delaware to establish ASPIRA of Delaware.

As stated above, the purpose of this Strategic Plan is that it serve as a guide for ASPIRA Associates. Each ASPIRA Associate must determine what program and organizational direction they will take, and the specific initiatives to be implemented over the next five years as well as their priorities. Each will base their individual plans on their own circumstances and history, social and economic trends, the needs of their specific communities and of youth, and their organizational capacity, including resources available. However, based on a consensus of the Association, the initiatives set forth in this Plan provide a general framework within which each Associate will develop their own plans and priorities.

## Summary of Objectives and Initiatives: 2003 - 2008

Over the next five years, ASPIRA's efforts will be directed at:

### Funding and Finance: ASPIRA's Priority

- Developing a national **Communications and Public Relations Campaign** to enhance ASPIRA's visibility as a means of promoting fund raising for the Associate offices,
- Expanding its efforts to secure funding from **traditional sources**, including government, foundations and corporations, and
- Developing **Alternative Revenue Streams** through excess revenue-producing ventures and leveraging the collective finances of the Association, such as technology training programs, and fee-for-service contracting,

### ASPIRA Programs and Schools

- Further expanding and strengthening ASPIRA's schools, including its charter schools and technical training schools and programs so they become models of educational success, including facilities, teacher professional development, and technology,
- Strengthening and expanding, where possible, those **Out-of-School Programs and Services** for youth and the community that continue to meet the ASPIRA's goals and strategic objectives, and that have proven effective, proven effective, such as the full implementation of ASPIRA's Youth Leadership Program, strengthening Guidance Counseling, Tutoring/Mentoring Programs, APEX, sustaining the CTCs, and expanding the cultural awareness programs, among others,
- Enhancing tools to allow national communications exchanges among **ASPIRANTS**,
- Developing new **program initiatives**, where warranted and feasible, to further enhance ASPIRA's services to young people, such as research on programs to prove their effectiveness, and an initiative on Personal Finance for youth

Advocacy

- Enhancing ASPIRA's **advocacy** on behalf of youth and our communities, focusing efforts on the issues of education reform and funding for in-and-after-school programs,

Management

- Further enhancing ASPIRA's **Management** through technology and professional development of staff to ensure high efficiency in operations,
- Fully implementing the ASPIRA **Standards of Excellence** initiative

Technology

- To ensure the sustainability of ASPIRA's national technology initiatives, including the CTCs, and expanding the technology training programs,
- Expand the use of technology as a communications tool, especially with funders,
- Completing the implementation of ASPIRA's Management Information System

Collaborations

- To sustain current productive collaborations and expand collaborations with national, state and local organizations with a focus on collaboratives that can help enhance the visibility of ASPIRA (and hence, its fund-raising), expand the reach (to more students) of its programs, and to increase its effectiveness in advocacy

## INITIATIVES: 2003-2008

### Fund Development

Given the economic environment, fund development will be the first priority of the Association over the next five years. This initiative is proposed to be divided into three major components.

1. A National Communications and Public Relations Campaign,
2. Increased efforts in fund raising from traditional sources,
3. Development of alternative funding streams,
4. Leveraging the Association's Income

### National Communications Campaign

ASPIRA will develop and implement a National Communications Plan over the next five years as one of its main priorities. The objective of this initiative will be to increase ASPIRA's visibility, as well as the visibility of its programs, at the national, state and local levels directly to enhance fund-raising. The Communications Plan will set forth target audiences, messages, and message delivery strategies. The plan will include a plan for the Association as a national organization as well as plans to enhance communications at each Associate office. The Plan will incorporate such strategies as

- use of mass media,
- national, state spokespersons,
- informational and promotional materials/media including a national promotional publications/videos/CDs,
- expansion of use of technology for communications

ASPIRA will seek direct funding for its communications initiatives. A major part of this plan will be to use technology to communicate with funders, including enhancements of the Associates and Association web sites, where many funders have sought information on ASPIRA.

### Increased Efforts in Fund-Raising from Traditional Sources

ASPIRA will further develop its overall capacity to identify government, foundation and corporate sources of support (funding and other resources) within and outside the community through prospect research using technology and other means, b) develop effective program design

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models for submission to funders, including writing effective proposals, c) develop fund-raising skills to seek and secure unrestricted funding, and d) continue to organize effective fund-raising events and activities.

Increased efforts in identifying, cultivating and seeking funding from traditional sources will include, among others:

- a national funding search program and database for all Associates to identify potential traditional sources of funding government, foundation, corporate at the local, state, regional and national levels,
- increased training and information dissemination on government funding sources and proposal development, and
- increased focus on fund-raising events of Associates such as the annual events, and ASPIRA's national conferences

In addition, ASPIRA will expand staff professional development and training on funding research and funding information management, proposal-writing, fund-raising activities, and communication with potential funders.

#### **New Revenue Streams**

ASPIRA must develop alternative revenue streams that are not donation dependent. This means developing programs and activities that generate revenue above expenses. There are two strategies proposed for generating this revenue:

- Fee-Based technical training programs, such as the Cisco Academies or ASPIRA's junior technical colleges,
- Fee-for-Service contracting, such as tutoring services or parent training services funded under Title I of the ESEA which ASPIRA Associates can apply for

A third alternative, which is perhaps farther off, is establishing "for profit" arms at individual ASPIRA Associates. This possibility will be explored during this period with each Associate.

ASPIRA will further develop and promote Technical Training Academies/Programs at each of the Associate offices. The National Office will further facilitate this process by identifying programs (e.g. Cisco, Microsoft, Adobe, ETS) and facilitating deals with these companies on behalf of the Associate offices.

### Leveraging the Association's Wealth

ASPIRA has a collective budget of over \$36 million per year. This provides the Association with major bargaining power to obtain favorable financing and services from financial institutions. Over the next five years ASPIRA will continue to develop mechanisms to leverage this wealth with financial institutions that will include:

- A national line of credit,
- Favorable terms on loans,
- Other services from financial institutions that require high minimum balances, such as a national sweep account.

### ASPIRA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

#### ASPIRA Schools

Within the context, mission, priorities and resources of each ASPIRA Associate, ASPIRA will continue to move forcefully in the area of operating formal regular and Charter schools or post secondary institutions. The overall goal of ASPIRA's schools is that every student in ASPIRA's schools will a) attain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet high academic standards that will enable them to successful advance in the studies, b) develop their leadership potential to the fullest and be committed to service to their community, and c) be aware, knowledgeable and proud of their Puerto Rican and Latino heritage.

The two priorities in support of ASPIRA's development of schools for the next five years will be facilities development and enhanced support for school quality.

##### Facilities

Several ASPIRA Associates have expanded their school efforts but the lack of facilities is already hindering their growth. The goal of this initiative is that by the end of the five years period, every ASPIRA school will be in adequate facilities, and, where possible, with facilities that have been acquired by ASPIRA Associates. ASPIRA will pursue two avenues to support the acquisition of schools facilities.

- local capital campaigns to be planned for each Associate to fund the purchase of facilities, that will include focusing on state local government funding, corporate and foundation support, and

- seeking beneficial financing for facilities with financial institutions through leveraging ASPIRA's national presence

#### Enhanced School Programs

This effort will focus on improving the quality of the ASPIRA schools. This will include seeking additional resources for ASPIRA schools. It will also focus on the exchange of information and educational resources among the Associates where appropriate. In this area, ASPIRA will focus on:

- developing a teacher professional development program for each ASPIRA school, as well as a teacher assessment tool to monitor teacher performance;
- develop school assessment and accountability tools—the development of systems for ASPIRA schools to effectively monitor their progress, including databases on student achievement, parental engagement and others;
- development/acquisition of enhanced materials and curriculum resources
- development of after-school programs for ASPIRA school students (e.g., tutoring, mentoring),
- expansion of parent/community involvement in schools through active parent/community engagement programs;
- increasing the use of technology in instruction and ensuring adequate technology in schools, and
- development of school management tools to increase effectiveness in the use of financial and other resources, including school-based Management Information Systems

#### **Out of School Programs and the ASPIRA Clubs**

After-school programs—the programs traditionally associated with ASPIRA, include the ASPIRA Clubs, student outreach (e.g., Talent Search), guidance counseling, tutoring, the ASPIRA mentoring program, youth and community access to technology (e.g., CTCs, technology literacy programs), HIV AIDS program, and parent/community engagement.

Over the next five years, ASPIRA will focus attention on:

- sustaining and, where possible, expanding existing model programs,
- collecting national data on after school programs,

- developing an initiative to systematically ascertain the effectiveness of ASPIRA programs through research and/or to develop programs that are research-based,
- conducting a comprehensive revision of the APEX curriculum to update its content and make it adaptable to each state based on ASPIRA's field experience;
- expanding programs that address violence, substance abuse, and health issues, such as HIV AIDS;
- developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to sustain ASPIRA's Community Technology Centers (CTCs);
- fully implementing a national Management Information System initiated during the current Plan period, and
- developing a new initiative on Financial Education for Youth and young adults that will include: Basic Financial Education, Homeownership, Insurance, Entrepreneurship

The ASPIRA Clubs Leadership Program is the core of ASPIRA's activities. During the next five years, in support of the Clubs, ASPIRA will

- support the full implementation the four-part ASPIRA Leadership Curriculum at the Club level (Fundamentals of Leadership, Public Policy, Entrepreneurship and Community Leadership).
- assist in the development of a national communications system to enable *all* ASPIRANTES and the ASPIRA Clubs Federations to communicate among themselves, share/disseminate information on activities and develop national, student-driven initiatives

#### **Cultural Awareness and Spanish**

ASPIRA is committed to promoting awareness of Puerto Rican and Hispanic culture and the use of Spanish. Over the past five years, ASPIRA developed IPRAC, mostly as a web-based portal with information on Puerto Rican history and culture. Over the next five years, the cultural awareness initiative will focus on the following:

- continued development of the IPRAC Portal so it becomes the definitive site on Puerto Rican history and culture,

- development of resources on other Latin American countries from which ASPIRANTES come, such as Mexico, Central and South America and the Dominican Republic to address the needs of those students;
- promotion of live cultural events, such as concerts, performances, lecture series, art exhibits, and others for youth, organized by ASPIRA or in collaboration with other organizations on Puerto Rico
- an initiative within the ASPIRA Clubs to offer Spanish language instruction, with a curriculum, in collaboration with existing language instruction providers, and
- a cultural exchange program to expose ASPIRANTES to Puerto Rican culture through visits to the Island, in collaboration with ASPIRA de Puerto Rico and other organizations

## **ADVOCACY**

As indicated above the main policy issues that ASPIRA will be facing over the next several years will be those policies at the state and federal levels related to **education reform** and **funding of in-school and out of school programs**. A major federal policy issue will be the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and funding for the **TRIO Programs**, which are so important to ASPIRA. ASPIRA will focus its efforts at the state and federal levels on these two issues (though local policy issues will, from time to time, need to be addressed by each Associate). The National Office will focus also on coordinating an Association wide mobilization to inform policy-makers on issues surrounding reform (e.g., assessments) that can have a negative impact on our youth as well as on funding of programs.

There are, of course, other policy issues that are important and will require attention. Examples include **funding for other programs** ASPIRA participates in and **national technology policy**, which affects our communities. Finally, as proposed in the last plan, ASPIRA will continue to explore legislative items for Associates and the Association from Congress and state legislatures.

An important feature of ASPIRA's advocacy must be the **participation of youth in advocacy efforts**. In order to further involve ASPIRANTES in state and national policy issues, ASPIRA will promote communication among ASPIRANTES on a national level on public policy. This initiative will be directed by the ASPIRA Clubs Federations and spearheaded by the Student Affairs Committee of the National Board of Directors.

ASPIRA will develop the following strategies and activities:

- extensive, on-going training of staff and youth on research and advocacy, and
- expanded communications through technology establishment of the ASPIRA Intranet for instant computer-based communications between all the ASPIRA Associates, the ASPIRA Internet connections for all ASPIRA Associates (including staff and students) for obtaining information on policy issues and data for research,
- increased publication of policy papers and briefs,
- periodic local, regional and national meetings and seminars on policy issues,
- development of an ASPIRA Web page with a policy forum, and
- extensive development of new strategic partnerships with local and national community-based organizations and advocacy groups on specific policy issues

## **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

ASPIRA needs to continuously address the development of its governance structure, including the on-going training of its boards of directors. ASPIRA also recognizes the critical importance of effective management and financial controls systems to ensure organizations stability and accountability to the community and external funding sources. Over the next five years, ASPIRA will engage in the following initiatives:

### **Boards of Directors: Training and Board Manual**

ASPIRA will develop a systematic Board Training Program that will include:

- providing all ASPIRA Associates' boards with training on Board Roles and Responsibilities, Strategic Planning and ASPIRA Mission, Basic Principles, and Goals and Objectives,
- developing a generic ASPIRA Board Member Manual to be used by all Associates' boards as part of the Board Manual

### **Management**

There are three main areas that ASPIRA will focus on in the next five years:

- Implementation of the ASPIRA Standards of Excellence,
- Staff Professional Development
- Full implementation of an ASPIRA MIS system

### **Standards of Excellence**

The ASPIRA Council of Executive Directors will develop a calendar for the implementation of the ASPIRA Standards of Excellence reviews. The objective will be to complete the reviews of all the Associates and the National Office by the end of the five year period.

### **Staff Professional Development**

ASPIRA developed an on-line system for training ASPIRA advisors. The tool has been used throughout the Association but without consistency. Over the next five years, it is proposed that this training tool be refined and utilized by all Associates as a means of training new advisors.

In addition to this training, the Council of Executive Directors will develop a Staff Development Plan that will define the staff training needs and training strategies. Training strategies will focus on the use of technology, including on-line and video-conferenced training tools developed in collaboration with outside companies and experts.

### **ASPIRA MIS**

Though the National Office developed an Management Information System to create a national database as well as local systems for reporting and management, the system confronted serious difficulties in its implementation. Several Associates have developed their own MIS system, which are not integrated into (nor can they create) a national database.

Either an improved version of the existing national MIS or an alternative system is sorely needed. Some Associates have no MIS and there is still no national database which is essential for, among others, demonstrating to funders the extent of ASPIRA's reach.

Over the next five years, ASPIRA will again work to develop a national system, either through a new and improved MIS or through the integration of existing systems.

### **TECHNOLOGY**

The main issues in technology remain: a) access of the community to state-of-the-art technology in their communities, b) use of technology as an educational tool, c) national communications, and d) use of technology for internal communications and support.

Over the next five years, ASPIRA will develop the following initiatives:

- develop and implement a strategy to ensure the sustainability and enhancement of the ASPIRA CTCs, including renewal of equipment, enhanced curriculum for

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technology literacy and enhance CTC support through the ASPIRA CTC Technical Assistance program and web site,

- strengthen the use of technology in ASPIRA schools, including enhanced use of technology as an instructional tool,
- enhance the use of technology to identify and communicate with potential funders,
- expand the use of technology to deliver ASPIRA programs, including curriculum delivered through technology,
- continue to expand the use of technology for internal and external communications, including video-conferencing/voice over IP alternatives, and student chat and national communications,
- strengthen and institutionalize the ASPIRA Technology Council,
- expand training on technology for Associates' staff and network professionals,
- continue the development of high tech training programs and schools,
- expand the use of technology to support data collection on programs and services (e.g., MIS), as well as for management,
- expand the ASPIRA web site with information on ASPIRA and its programs, as well as a tool for interactive learning.

## **COLLABORATIONS**

Another cross-cutting area are the collaborations that ASPIRA establishes with agencies and organizations to enhance programs and advocacy. ASPIRA has hundreds of collaborations, including over 50 formal collaborations with federal agencies, and national Latino and non-Latino organizations. Some of the major collaborations include partnerships with National Education Association, U.S. Departments of Transportation and Health and Human Services, Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, among many others. Establishing these partnerships has significantly increased ASPIRA's reach, visibility and credibility nationally.

Over the next five years, ASPIRA will continue to develop partnerships that a) benefit the community and youth and b) benefit ASPIRA through either helping to expand its programs or its influence on policy issues.

## EXPANSION

Over the past five years, several ASPIRA Associates have expanded their operations within their states, establishing offices and/or programs well beyond the main office city. ASPIRA of New Jersey, Florida, Puerto Rico and Connecticut have expanded to several cities. ASPIRA will continue to support those Associates that decide to expand their operations within their states.

ASPIRA has not formally expanded outside the six states and Puerto Rico since the establishment of ASPIRA of Connecticut 12 years ago. There have been numerous inquiries by community groups in several states, such as Texas, Massachusetts and Indiana and others about establishing an ASPIRA Affiliate. However, in spite of assistance and information provided by the National office, these efforts have not been followed through locally, mostly because of the strict requirements that ASPIRA has to recognize and affiliate.

For the first time in 12 years there is a serious attempt by a group of Puerto Rican leaders to establish an ASPIRA Affiliate in Delaware. The group includes prominent community leaders and educators with access to government as well as private funding. In February 2003, the National Board of Directors approved a resolution to allow this group to continue organizing and instructed the National Office to provide technical assistance to the initiative.

Over the next five years, and assuming that the community leadership in Delaware is able to meet the criteria established by ASPIRA, the National office will continue to work to establish ASPIRA of Delaware.

Though ASPIRA has not formally expanded to other states, it has pursued the strategy of reaching more Latino youth through the establishment of programs in various states through partnerships with other organizations. The CTCs are a recent example. ASPIRA has partnered with organizations in Texas, California, Indiana, Washington DC and others to establish ASPIRA programs. This strategy is efficient, since ASPIRA can develop programs and can reach more young people without having to develop a formal infrastructure in those states.

Over the next five years, and where feasible, ASPIRA will continue to partner with organizations to deliver its model programs, such as the CTCs, APEX and the youth leadership programs, though assuring that these are implemented as ASPIRA programs and that they are implemented with quality control safeguards.

# **Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association 2003-2008**

**A Guide to Action for the ASPIRA Association**

**August 2003**

## **APPENDIX**

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES**

### **MISSION**

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

# **Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association 2003-2008**

## **A Guide to Action for the ASPIRA Association August 2003**

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES**

In the review of ASPIRA's mission, the Association has reaffirmed fundamental principles that will guide it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century

#### **1 ASPIRA An Inclusive Puerto Rican Organization**

Over 42 years ago ASPIRA was founded by Puerto Ricans to foster the development of the Puerto Rican community. Its basic philosophy, vision, programs and services, have deep roots in Puerto Rican culture and in the Puerto Rican community in the United States. Moreover, in its three decades of expansion, ASPIRA has grown mainly in Puerto Rican communities across the country, and for many years, served the Puerto Rican community and Puerto Rican youth almost exclusively.

Over the past several years, however, ASPIRA has expanded its services to other Latino communities and to youth from a broad range of Latino and non-Latino backgrounds. By the mid-1980's ASPIRA formally recognized that it must broaden its scope to serve other Latino communities. This move to expand its service base beyond the Puerto Rican community has helped thousands of non-Puerto Rican Latinos and non-Latinos in all ASPIRA states. It has also generated discussion about the fundamental focus of ASPIRA as a service organization. After years of discussion, a consensus has been reached.

The ASPIRA Association reaffirms that it is fundamentally a Puerto Rican organization. Because of its origin, development and culture -having emerged from the Puerto Rican community to serve the Puerto Rican community- as well as because of the persistent needs of our own Puerto Rican youth, it should remain focused on the Puerto Rican community and Puerto Rican youth.

ASPIRA recognizes, however, the needs of other Latino communities and other Latino youth in the states that it serves, and that ASPIRA has a process that can be effective in helping to empower and develop other youth and other Latino communities. Therefore, ASPIRA recognizes that it has a responsibility to other Latino and non-Latino youth and

communities, and believes that it must be inclusive. ASPIRA's doors must be open to *all* Latino and non-Latino minority youth that can benefit from its programs and services.

## **2. Youth and the Development of the Community**

The philosophy that determines the goals, objectives and activities of ASPIRA undertaken by the organization rests on the basic premise that Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, as a community have the collective potential to develop their own human and material resources that will permit them to share in the social, economic and political benefits and responsibilities of the larger society. It is through the empowerment of the Puerto Rican and Latino community that is can develop this potential and that the community can develop and thrive. Moreover, it is by providing Puerto Rican and Latino youth with access to a quality education and through the development of their leadership, that this potential can be realized.

Hence, ASPIRA reaffirms that the future development and wellbeing of the Puerto Rican and Latino community, rests with its youth and that Puerto Rican and Latino youth must remain at the center of all ASPIRA efforts.

## **3. An ASPIRANTE**

It is ASPIRA's purpose to provide for the development of Puerto Rican and Latino youth who

- *Has the skills to succeed academically, both in school and/or in college, as well as in the workplace*
- *Is committed to service to the community and to be an advocate for the community.*
- *Knows him/herself, is proud and knowledgeable of his/her Puerto Rican and Latino heritage and strives to be bilingual.*
- *Recognizes and values diversity in his/her community and in society at large.*
- *Is a positive role model for his/her peers and for Puerto Rican and Latino youth.*
- *Has the organizational and leadership skills lead a productive life and to effectively advance the development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community.*
- *Is knowledgeable about his/her community and is resourceful in drawing on the resources within and outside the community to advance its development.*

#### **4. The ASPIRA Process**

The *ASPIRA Process*, devised over 40 years ago, and refined over decades of working with thousands of youth, sets forth that, to become effective leaders youth must be *aware* of themselves -of their current situation and challenges, of their goals and aspirations and their potential for leading, and aware of the community that surrounds them. Once aware, youth must *analyze* both themselves and their communities, become knowledgeable about them and be able to propose solutions. This involves research about the community, its past and prospects for the future. Awareness and analysis, however, are not sufficient *action* must follow. Youth must not only be able to chart course of action, but must engage actively in implementing solutions. This is an active process in each of 5 stages that builds, first and foremost, on self reliance on what youth can do for themselves first. It is an active process that applies equally to individual development and to social action. In this process, ASPIRA assists, guides, supports and nurtures youth, providing educational opportunities, the tools for self development and validation of their worth.

These three basic elements - awareness, analysis and action - are the core of a process that every ASPIRANTE must pursue.

The ASPIRA Association therefore reaffirms its belief that the *ASPIRA Process* of leadership development is central to the full development of leadership of Puerto Rican and Latino youth, and must remain ASPIRA's core strategy.

#### **5. The ASPIRA Clubs**

ASPIRA also reaffirms its belief that the core mechanism for bringing together our youth and for providing them with the opportunity to develop their leadership potential, are the ASPIRA Clubs. The ASPIRA Clubs -organized in schools and led by the youth themselves- have been at the center of ASPIRA activities since its inception. They have proven to be a highly effective way of organizing youth and promoting the development of the personal traits and values, and academic leadership skills that should be expected of each ASPIRANTE.

The ASPIRA Association reaffirms that the ASPIRA Clubs are and will remain central to all ASPIRA activities and that promoting and supporting the ASPIRA Clubs will continue to be a core activity of ASPIRA.

#### *6. Puerto Rican/Latino Culture and the Spanish Language*

One of the core values of ASPIRA since its inception has been pride in our rich Puerto Rican Latino heritage and national identity, and to promote our growth as a people by building on our culture and history. ASPIRA has as a central part of *all* its activities- instilled pride among *Aspirantes* of their culture background and history, promoting awareness and study, and placing this heritage and background at the center of our efforts to promote self esteem, to defend of our national identity, and to enhance individual and collective growth. Our Puerto Rican and Latino culture is what perhaps best defines us and upon which we must build our future.

Language is at the core of culture. More than any other aspect of culture, language is the common bond of a people through which culture is expressed and through which we further develop our culture. And, language is important not only because it is our common cultural bond, but in the context of a world that is becoming more global, the mastery of more than one language will be extremely beneficial, if not essential, to our success in all areas of our lives.

In the case of ASPIRA, the Spanish language which is central to our Puerto Rican and Latino culture, is a bond of which we must be proud, that must be preserved and that must be promoted among *all Aspirantes*. Recognizing the intrinsic value of learning Spanish and the value of bilingualism generally, it must be the responsibility of ASPIRA, in promoting our Puerto Rican and Latino culture and the overall educational development of our youth, to strive to ensure that *all Aspirantes* have the benefit of learning both English and Spanish well, that they become aware of the rich cultural heritage that the Spanish language expresses and that they strive to become bilingual to have a competitive advantage in the global job market of the future.

The ASPIRA Association, therefore, reaffirms that the preservation and development of our Puerto Rican and Latino culture and the Spanish language are central to our identity as a people and that it is the foundation on which we must build our future. It recognizes also, that learning more than one language expands opportunities for individual growth and for employment. Therefore, ASPIRA reaffirms that it is its responsibility to foster, in all of its

programs and initiatives, our Puerto Rican and Latino culture, and that the Spanish must be incorporated throughout all ASPIRA activities.

#### *7. Advocacy*

Advocating for policies that benefit the education of our youth and the development of our communities has been central to ASPIRA since 1961. Advocacy on public policy issues has also been a critical part of what ASPIRA includes in its leadership development program for our youth.

### **MISSION**

Based on this philosophy, the ASPIRA Association has defined its mission as follows:

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*To empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy and the education and leadership development of its youth.*

The ASPIRA Association will enhance the Puerto Rican and Latino community by developing and nurturing the leadership, intellectual and cultural potential of its youth so that they may contribute their skills and dedication to the fullest development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community everywhere.

### **GOALS OF THE ASPIRA ASSOCIATION**

ASPIRA, as a movement organized in six states and Puerto Rico, with deep roots in these communities, is unified in its commitment to a common set of primary Association goals to meet its mission. The overriding theme of these goals, based on the Association's mission, is the

empowerment and development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community through educational excellence and leadership development of youth

The goals of the ASPIRA Association provide the basic framework for all the programs and activities of each member of the ASPIRA family. To achieve these general goals, each Associate plans and implements programs and activities that are appropriate to the conditions, needs and resources in each of the communities they serve.

These Goals are:

- To develop the leadership potential of Puerto Rican and other Latino youth by encouraging them to become aware of the socio-economic and political conditions, needs, and potential of their community, and by fostering a commitment to dedicate their full talents and skills towards the further development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community
- To motivate, orient and assist Puerto Rican and other Latino youth in their personal, intellectual, cultural and educational development, through a) the provision of extensive academic and career counseling, b) high quality in-school and after school educational programs, c) leadership skills development, and d) family and community involvement
- To increase access of Puerto Rican and Latino youth to quality education and leadership development, through educational and policy research, national and local demonstration programs and local, state and national advocacy

### **A Plan for the ASPIRA Association: The Process**

This Strategic Plan collects nearly a year of Association-wide analysis and discussions, led by the Presidents/Executive Directors. The Council of Executive Directors has had two strategic planning meetings in which they outlined the basic issues, long-term goals and objectives for each Associate and developed the outline of what should be the direction, goals and objectives of the Association as a whole.

The current document collects the best thinking of the ASPIRA operational leadership. It is proposed as a draft to the National Board of Directors for discussion. It is expected that this discussion, which will be initiated in August 2003, will lead to an organization wide review, further discussion and input from across the Association, including staff and especially

*ASPIRANTES.* The hope is that this plan can be finalized by January 2004 and adopted by the National Board of Directors.

Once finalized and approved, the National Office will take on the role of providing technical assistance to all the ASPIRA Associates their boards and staff in developing statewide strategic plans for each Associate. In the same way, the National office will engage in a process of developing its own five year strategic plan.

### **Basic Premises of the National Planning Process**

The basic premises upon which the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 are based were set forth in the Strategic Plan 1998-2003 and remain valid for the current planning initiative. These are:

- The ASPIRA Association is a confederation of independent organizations (ASPIRA Associates) that although united in voluntary association through the ASPIRA Association *Articles of Association* are autonomous. It is the Board of Directors of each Associate that determines the goals, policies, programs, practices, and organizational structure of the organization, within the general parameters set in the *Articles of Association* and the by-laws of the Association.
- Though all ASPIRA Associates share the basic mission, principles and core strategies of ASPIRA for empowering and developing the Puerto Rican and Latino community through the education and leadership development of its youth, each is unique. Each Associate is set within a distinct social, economic and political environment that determines the needs of its youth and the strategies required to attain its mission. Each Associate has a distinct organizational history and organizational structure, and each has an established set of programs, interests and unique capabilities.

Therefore

- The Strategic Plan for the ASPIRA Association must be the result of the consensus of all the ASPIRA Associates, produced through the collective analysis and incorporating the experience and wisdom of all ASPIRA Associates.
- Based on the fundamental principles contained in the ASPIRA Association *Articles of Association*, the Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association must set forth the overarching vision, direction, and strategies for attaining ASPIRA's overall mission as a national organization. It must incorporate, bring together, and build on, the

vision, goals, programs and organizational capabilities of each and all of the ASPIRA Associates, to set the overall direction of the *Association*. As such, the Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association is a *general guide* for the Associates in their individual planning and development processes.

- The role of the National Board of Directors in national strategic planning is to bring together the collective thought and experience of the ASPIRA Associates, and to build an Association wide consensus regarding the national direction and national goals and strategies of the Association. The role of the National Office is to compile the results of this process and to develop a plan to a) support the development of each Associate based on the Association's national goals and objectives and each Associate's individual plans, and b) implement strategies that are national in scope to meet the goals of the Association.







## ASPIRA Association, Inc.

### *Report to the National Board of Directors*

By

Ronald Blackburn-Moreno  
President

February 2004





# PROGRESS REPORT

to the

*National Board of Directors*  
of the  
ASPIRA Association  
by

Ronald Blackburn-Moreno  
President

February 2004

## INTRODUCTION

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This Progress Report covers the activities of the National Office in the seven months between July and January, 2004. The last report to the Board of Directors was presented at the meeting of the Board of Directors in August, 2003.

## Highlights

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The period between July and January has been particularly productive. Efforts have been dedicated mainly to

- a) implementing a communications strategy, which has included sponsoring a Tribute to Dr Antonia Pantoja at the U.S. Capitol, signing of an agreement with Platinum Television to develop a video on ASPIRA, a press conference with Nationwide Insurance in Washington and Columbus, OH to launch the financial education program on insurance, redesign of the ASPIRA web site, sponsoring a Latino theater festival in Washington, publicizing the ASPIRA conference in Puerto Rico through Univision, and development of printed promotional materials,
- b) providing extensive technical assistance to Associates in a range of areas, but especially on enhancing and accrediting ASPIRA schools, the creation of a Council of ASPIRA Principals, training of Associates technical staff, and assisting Associates secure local and national funding,

- c) completing the development and pilot-testing of the ASPIRA's Financial Education Program curriculum (Basic Financial Literacy, Entrepreneurship and Investments, and Insurance),
- d) developing and submitting a host of grant applications,
- e) continued implementation of ASPIRA's transportation and health education programs,
- f) further enhancing ASPIRA's technology and support for Associates,
- g) continuing to seek funding for various ASPIRA initiatives;
- h) finalizing the financial audit for both FY 2002 and 2003, and
- i) developing financial policies and an Accounting Manual.

## **Events and Accomplishments**

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Among the major events and accomplishments during this period were

**Communications** The draft of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 that was presented to the National Board of Directors at the last meeting in August sets, as the first priority for ASPIRA, enhanced national communications. Significant advances have been made on this front in the past three months.

- a) The National Office sponsored a *Tribute to Dr. Antonia Pantoja* in Washington (at the U.S. Capitol) which was attended by over 100 national Hispanic leaders, representatives of Hispanic and non-Hispanic organizations. The speakers included Reg Weaver, President of the National Education Association and Resident Commissioner Acevedo Vila. The event was videotaped for national broadcast by HITT
- b) A contract was signed with Platinum Television to develop an eight to ten minute video on ASPIRA for broadcast in 25 markets under the *Family Today* program series. The video will target the non-Hispanic market. Filming is scheduled for March 2004
- c) Two joint press conferences were held with Nationwide Insurance (Washington, DC at the Press Club on November 6, 2003 and in Columbus, OH, November 7, 2003) to announce the launch of the new Financial Education program in insurance
- d) The National Office completed the full redesign of the ASPIRA Web Site and launched it in December. The web site, includes a whole new interphase that is visually attractive and simpler to use. This interphase will facilitate navigation of the site and its multiple sub-sites that has exploded in size over the last year
- e) ASPIRA and ASPIRA of NJ gained significant publicity at its Golf Tournament through coverage by Univisión (and NJ Public Television)

Univisión sponsored the event. ASPIRA (along with other national organizations) was named in a full-page advertisement by Univisión in the Washington Post for its support of the Univisión purchase of Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation. We are currently working with Univisión on ways to further publicize ASPIRA and its programs.

- f) ASPIRA was featured in the National Education Association June, 2003 publication *Trends Issues in Urban Education*, highlight a discussion on ESEA (No Child Left Behind) with H Crespo, VP Public Policy at ASPIRA and Raul González, NCLR.
- g) ASPIRA's Office of Public Policy has continued to develop and disseminate public policy information through the *Piture News* and *ASPIRA Public Policy* electronic newsletters.
- h) In addition to the expansion and continuous up-dating of the ASPIRA web site, and at the recommendation of the Council of Executive Directors/Presidents, the National Office is developing a series of publications on ASPIRA for publicity purposes. These will be completed in the Spring and will be distributed for use throughout the Association.
- i) Additional funding this year will allow the National Office to hire a full time Communications Specialist or to contract an outside firm. There are several candidates for the position and we have two proposals from public relations firm to plan and carry out a major communications initiative.
- j) With a small grant from Verizon, the National Office will be developing a literacy campaign with a Hispanic artist. Efforts are underway to contact and involve a prominent Latino artist for the program.
- k) As has become a custom in Washington, ASPIRA co-sponsored, with the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration and the National Puerto Rican Coalition, its traditional *Fiesta de Reyes*. Over 800 mostly Latinos from the Washington area attended the event. In lieu of a charge for the event, ASPIRA requested a donation of children's books to be donated to schools and organization in the Washington area that serve Latinos.

**Program Implementation** The extensive efforts during this period were continued to implement of various funded programs.

**Financial Education** The curriculum for the three-component Financial Education curriculum was completed and is currently being pilot-tested at several Associates. With support from the CitiGroup Foundation, Nationwide Insurance Corporation, Morgan Stanley Corporation, and, more recently by GMAC Corporation, this initiative focuses on developing a three part curricula (printed and on-line) for youth and adults to obtain information on

- 1 Persona finance Focus on **Banking, Homeownership** (Citigroup Grant) and **automobile ownership** (GMAC grant) that includes such topics as credit, banking, financial planning and home and car ownership,
- 2 Personal Finance Focus on **Insurance** to protect wealth and assets (Nationwide Insurance Grant), and
- 3 Personal Finance **Investing and Entrepreneurship** (Morgan Stanley Grant)

The curriculum in basic financial literacy (A facilitators' guide using Smart Money from the FDIC) and the insurance curriculum have been completed and field tested. Pilot testing has taken place in NY, CT, IL and Florida. The insurance curriculum is being translated into Spanish and will be ready for full implementation in the Spring.

With a grant from GMAC, ASPIRA Field tested GMAC's auto purchasing curriculum in English and Spanish. The field test report was submitted to GMAC and a follow-up proposal is being developed to implement the program nationally as part of the financial literacy program. The curriculum on Entrepreneurship (sponsored by Morgan Stanley) is being completed and will be field tested beginning in the fall. ASPIRA is negotiating a major second grant from Citibank to develop a curriculum on Homeownership.

**HIV AIDS, Traffic Safety.** ASPIRA's HIV AIDS Prevention Curriculum is on the ASPIRA web site in Spanish. A guide for middle and high school students for promoting the health professions is being finalized. The Health and Traffic Safety initiatives resulted in several publications (e.g., newsletters, a Mentoring Manual) as well as the expansion of the programs' web sites.

**Technology.** In technology, ASPIRA provided training to technical and managerial staff of the Sistema Universitario Ana G. Méndez in Puerto Rico on a fee-for-service basis. A Technology Council was created, composed of the chief technology officer of each of the Associates. The Council meets regularly through tele video conferencing to exchange ideas, solutions and to develop plans to further enhance technology throughout the Association. The Tech Council has been very active.

**Working Together to Foster the ASPIRA Associates** In addition to technology, technical assistance to the Associates has focused on strengthening ASPIRA schools and the possible accreditation of post secondary schools at ASPIRA of Illinois and ASPIRA de Puerto Rico. Extensive assistance has been provided ASPIRA of Illinois on the curriculum and the technology for the new Mirta Ramírez high school in Chicago. ASPIRA of IL and Puerto Rico are working together on accrediting their respective post secondary colleges so they can qualify to receive Pell Grants.

A second accomplishment in the area of strengthening ASPIRA schools was the creation of an ASPIRA-wide Council of Principals. The Council, which includes the principals of all ASPIRA schools, is designed to be a mechanism to share information, curriculum and other resources among the schools.

The National Office also provided technical assistance to Associates in securing grants. Most notably, it assisted ASPIRA de Puerto Rico secure an \$800,000 contract with the University of Puerto Rico and assisted in writing the proposal that secured \$300,000 for ASPIRA de PR under the Community Technology Center program. Grants for technology (\$20,000 each for computers) were awarded to ASPIRA of Florida and ASPIRA of Illinois.

In addition to the direct technical assistance, ASPIRA has negotiated a National Line of Credit with Citibank that will be discussed at this meeting. The \$1 million line of credit offer from Citibank (of which \$500,000 will be requested) will be used to resolve cash flow issues for all the Associates as well as a fund for start-up programs and innovation. Specific policies are being developed for the fund. This line of credit is the first concrete program negotiated with Citibank under our agreement with the corporation. Other programs will include financial literacy, access of staff and communities to banking and loans on favorable conditions, and others. This is an innovative program, especially since the Association is leveraging the strength of its combined budgets for the first time.

**Technology & Technology Technical Assistance** The main advances in technology during this period are

- a) An Association wide training of technical staff was held in November in Newark. This one-week intensive training for over 15 technical staff, was designed to prepare ASPIRA's technical staff to migrate our system to Microsoft Server 2000 and Active Directory, which all Associates will be using in the near future. This training is in addition to the training offered in Washington DC to over 20 staff from the Associates that covered various aspects of technology (e.g., planning, use, security)
- b) The Association has been studying various video teleconferencing alternatives to reduce meeting costs. The Technology Council has been using this technology in the regular meetings
- c) As mentioned above, the redesign of the ASPIRA Web Site, which is expected was launched in December
- d) ASPIRA has a full time information technology officer, Ms. Lillian Nuñez, who provides direct second tier technical assistance to all the Associates on demand

- e) The National Office is developing a comprehensive training curriculum for technical as well as non-technical staff at the Associates. With the support of Verizon, trainings will begin this semester. The training will include highly technical training for information specialists (e.g., network security/maintenance) as well as basic technology training for other staff.

**Grants and Contracts FY 2003** - ASPIRA has been awarded the following grants and contracts for FY 2004, bringing its budget to a revised \$1.56 million.

- a) National Highway Transportation Safety Administration: \$100,000 to continue our work in Highway Safety education;
- b) Office of Minority Health, Department of Health and Human Services: \$100,000 to continue work on the HIV/AIDS education program;
- c) Department of Transportation, District of Columbia: \$75,000 to continue work on highway safety education;;
- d) Sistema Universitario Ana G. Méndez: \$85,000 to conduct training for network managers and staff and to develop security policies for the university system.

Other continuation grants include:

- a) CitiGroup Foundation - \$110,000 this year to complete the Financial Education program for youth focusing on credit, banking and homeownership (curriculum completed);
- a) Nationwide Insurance - \$225,000 to be completed this year for the Financial Education program for youth focusing on insurance education;
- b) Morgan Stanley Co. - \$100,000 this year for a Financial Program focusing on investing (curriculum due to be completed this month).
- c) GMAC - \$35,000 to pilot test a car-buying curriculum for youth in Washington (to be completed in August)

A major accomplishment in this area has been the significant increase in unrestricted gifts to ASPIRA. This year it expected that general operating support grants will exceed \$200,000 not including the SUAGM contract. As will be covered below, the National Office requires only \$4,000 in unrestricted funds this year to cover its general operating costs, since most of these costs are covered through indirect cost recovery. This should provide the National Office with a surplus of funds this year.

In addition to grants, ASPIRA is secured \$35,000 in funding for the ASPIRA Golf Tournament and Technology Tools conference in Puerto Rico in December from Coors and Univisión. T

**Partnerships** - A significant amount of effort was made in further developing ASPIRA partnerships. Two new partnerships were formalized through the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU): the University of Puerto Rico and Telecentros

de las Américas. The MOU with the University of Puerto Rico was signed by the President of the University, the Executive Director of ASPIRA de Puerto Rico and the President of the National Office at the ASPIRA conference in December in Puerto Rico. The MOU calls for collaboration in developing bilingual programs for Puerto Rican students on the mainland to study at the UPR, as well as several initiatives to train teachers, among others. The office is currently engaged, with the ASPIRA Associates, in the program to recruit students from the mainland to study in a special bilingual program at UPR Cayey. Several students from New Jersey are currently studying at the Cayey Campus and a plan is in place to visit schools across the Association to recruit students for next year

The Telecentros de la Americas is a joint venture between national organizations in the U.S. and Latin America that bring together Community Technology Centers throughout the hemisphere (over 5,000 CTCs in total). Under the auspices of the United Nations, the MOU was signed via simultaneous satellite link, that brought together ASPIRA (in Puerto Rico), CTCNet (in Washington, DC), Mexico (in Mexico City), Canada (in Vancouver) and the UN (in Geneva). The broad MOU calls for collaboration in a host of areas to extend access to technology throughout Latin America. Brazil is considering joining this initiative, which "internationalizes" ASPIRA. A first planning meeting was just held in Mexico City with support from Microsoft. For ASPIRA, the meeting was attended by the ASPIRA Board Chair, Ms. Myrna Rivera and Ms. Hilda Crespo, VP for Public Policy.

The significant effort was dedicated to the partnership HACR. ASPIRA was part of the Search Committee working with a search firm to identify and hire a new HACR President and CEO. As treasurer of the HACR board, I have been very active in HACR's accounting and finances, assuring that the organization is financially sound, which has taken considerable time. HACR has now appointed a new President, Mr. Alfonso Martínez, who was welcomed at a reception at the Library of Congress. I have remained very active in various HACR ventures and activities, including finances, board participation, advise to the new President, the latest issues surrounding Wal-Mart's employment practices, and the other HACR partnerships (e.g., Ford Motor Co., GM, Daimler Chrysler, Altria).

HACR completed its move to ASPIRA (after remodeling), and is now occupying one third of ASPIRA's space, that will generate almost \$60,000 in annual revenue for ASPIRA.

Other partnerships that were nurtured this period were the CTCNet (Mr. John Villamil, the Executive Vice President is on CTCNet Board), the National Education Association, which resulted in the new President of the NEA -Reggie Weaver-speaking at the ASPIRA-sponsored Tribute to Dr. Antonia Pantoja, as well as a new Policy Collaboration on urban education with the NEA and the National Council of La Raza.

H. Crespo serves on several boards and committees including: The National Coalition of Advocates for Students, the Department of Education's National Advisory Team of English Language Learners, Dialogue on Diversity, Committee of Advisors, America's Promise National Advisory Committee, National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, among others.

**Public Policy** - The Vice President for Public Policy unit has made presentations on the implications of No Child Left Behind for the Latino Community at the Latino Prevention Network Conference, held in Chicago, Illinois, and at the NEA Conference in New Orleans in June, 2003.

The National Office now has a new Public Policy Web Site with content on issues that affect the education of Hispanics as well as a host of links to information on policy issues. Over four months of work went into developing the site, that includes information on No Child Left Behind, IDEA, general education issues, Traffic and Traffic Safety, health and others.

**ASPIRA Strategic Plan: 2003-2008** - ASPIRA submitted and presented the draft of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 to the National Board of Directors during its last meeting. A specific timeline for activities and a set of specific priorities have been developed to present at the board meeting in February. The plan calls for a major focus on Communications.

As I indicated in my last report, the second Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association is a historic milestone in the development of the organization. The first plan set the course for the Association over the past five years. Most of the initiatives of the past five years Association-wide were the result of the planning process. All of the ASPIRA boards were informed of the plan and each modeled the local plan on the national one, enhancing the overall cohesion of the organization.

**Finance and Administration** - The main efforts in this area have been:

- a) Closing of FY 2003 and the audit of FY 2003. The audit was completed with an unqualified opinion. The results will be presented to the board at the February meeting. The FY 2002 and 2003 audits were completed within a period of six months and we are now up to date. The next audit is expected to take place in September.
- b) Developing the proposed budget for FY 04, which was approved by the Executive Committee in February. The approved FY 04 budget is \$1.5 million including only the grants already awarded. This number has already grown with additional grants received (e.g., Ford Motor Co \$50,000, UPS Foundation \$75,000). Other corporate unrestricted funds are expected by the middle of the spring 2004, as are new grants that are being negotiated.

The new budget has allowed for hiring at least three new full time staff members: a Director of Finance, and Administrative Assistant, a Curriculum Specialist and a Communications Director. The Director of Finance has been hired (Mr. Kelly Oriola) and we are interviewing for the Administrative Assistant position for the Finance Office. Accounting is still being done by the firm of González and Associates out of Denver, CO and Washington, DC.

- c) The completion of the Accounting Manual by González and Associates that includes all policies and procedures for budgeting, accounting, accounts payable and accounts receivable. The Manual was shared with the Associates and revised with their recommendations. It will serve as a model so they can revise their own manuals.
- d) The extensive use by ASPIRA of Connecticut of its line of credit provided by the National Office for short-term loans. This line is from the National offices cash, not the endowment fund or line of credit. In addition, a short term loan was issued to ASPIRA of New York to cover short-term shortfall for payroll.

The National Office's Line of Credit with Citibank (\$200,000) was renewed. This line is separate from the line being requested for the Association.

Citibank has proposed a Line of Credit of an additional \$800,000 for the full Association. The proposal will be submitted to the Board at the February meeting.